
PRAYERS

AT THE TIME OF DEATH

As death approaches, the Church stays close to the one who is dying, to give comfort and support. The family should ask that Holy Communion be brought to the dying. This is Viaticum, food for the journey. Members of the local Church may wish to join the family in a vigil of prayer. After the person's death, the family is encouraged to continue in prayer, to take part in the preparation of the vigil (wake) and funeral liturgies, and to participate in the preparation of the body for burial. In all of these moments, many of the traditional prayers of the Church may be chosen.

*VIATICUM*¹

Viaticum is the sacrament of the dying. In Viaticum the dying person is united with Christ in his passage out of this world to the Father. When the minister has brought holy Communion, the rite may begin with the renewal of the dying person's profession of faith.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

- V.** Do you reject sin,
so as to live in the freedom of God's children?
- R.** I do.
- V.** Do you reject the glamor of evil
and refuse to be mastered by sin?
- R.** I do.
- V.** Do you reject Satan,
father of sin and prince of darkness?
- R.** I do.

1. NCCB, *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, 1988.

V. Do you believe in God,
the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

R. I do.

V. Do you believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary,
was crucified, died, and was buried,
rose from the dead,
and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

R. I do.

V. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting?

R. I do.

V. This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church.
We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

R. Amen.

Viaticum is then celebrated in the same manner as Communion of the Sick (see p. 275), but, after giving Communion, the minister says:

May the Lord Jesus Christ protect you
and lead you to eternal life.

R. Amen.

The concluding prayer follows:

God of peace,
you offer eternal healing to those who believe in you;
you have refreshed your servant **N.**
with food and drink from heaven:
lead him (her) safely into the kingdom of light.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

COMMENDATION OF THE DYING²

Through the prayers designated for the commendation of the dying, the Church helps to sustain their union with Christ to the Father until it is brought to fulfillment after death.

Christians have the responsibility of expressing their union in Christ by joining the dying person in prayer for God's mercy and for confidence in Christ. In particular, the presence of a priest or deacon shows more clearly that the Christian dies in the communion of the Church. He should assist the dying person, and all those present in the recitation of the prayers of commendation; and after the person's death, he should lead the others in the *Prayers after Death* (p. 569). If the priest or deacon is unable to be present because of other serious pastoral obligations, other members of the community should be prepared to assist with these prayers and should have the texts readily available to them.

The minister may choose texts from among the prayers, litanies, aspirations, psalms, and readings. In the selection of these texts, the minister should keep in mind the condition and piety of both the dying person and the members of the family who are present. The prayers are best said in a slow, quiet manner, alternating with periods of silence. If possible, the minister says one or more of the brief formulas with the dying person. These may be softly repeated two or three times.

These texts are intended to help the dying person, if still conscious, to face the natural human anxiety about death by imitating Christ in his patient suffering and dying. The Christian will be helped to surmount his or her fear, in the hope of heavenly life and resurrection through the power of Christ, who destroyed the power of death by his own dying.

2. (ICEL), *Rites of Anointing and Viaticum, Pastoral Care of the Sick*, 1982.

[A person who appears to be unconscious may, in reality, be conscious and able to hear and join mentally the praying.] Even if the dying person is not conscious, those who are present will draw consolation from these prayers and come to a better understanding of the paschal character of Christian death. The leader may be visibly expressed this by making the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the dying person, who was first signed with the cross at Baptism. Immediately after death has occurred, all may kneel, while one of those present leads the prayers.

SHORT TEXTS

One or more of the following short texts may be recited with the dying person. If necessary, they may be softly repeated two or three times:

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| Who can separate us
from the love of Christ? | Romans 8:35 |
| Whether we live or die,
we are the Lord's. | Romans 14:8 |
| We have an everlasting home
in heaven. | 2 Corinthians 5:1 |
| We shall be with the Lord
for ever. | 1 Thessalonians 4:17 |
| We shall see God as he really is. | 1 John 3:2 |
| We have passed from death
to life because we love each other. | 1 John 3:14 |
| To you, Lord, I lift up my soul. | Psalms 25:1 |
| The Lord is my light and my salvation. | Psalms 27:1 |
| I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living. | Psalms 27:13 |
| My soul thirsts for the living God. | Psalms 42:2 |
| Though I walk in the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me. | Psalms 23:4 |

"In my Father's home there are many dwelling places," says the Lord Jesus. **John 14:2**

"Come, blessed of my Father," says the Lord Jesus, "and take possession of the kingdom prepared for you." **Matthew 25:33**

The Lord Jesus says, "Today you will be with me in paradise." **Luke 23:43**

The Lord Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again to take you to myself." **John 14:2-3**

I desire that where I am, they also may be with me," says the Lord Jesus. **John 17:24**

Everyone who believes in the Son has eternal life," says the Lord Jesus. **John 6:40**

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit. **Psalms 31:5**

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. **Acts 7:59**

Holy Mary, pray for me.

Saint Joseph, pray for me.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

BIBLICAL READINGS

The word of God is proclaimed by one of those present or by the minister. Selections may be made from the following.

Isaiah 35:3-4, 6c-7, 10-11

Job 19:23-27a

Psalms 23

Psalms 25:1, 5-11

Psalms 91

Psalms 114

Psalms 116:3-5

Psalms 121:1-4

Psalms 123

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

1 John 4:16

Revelation 21:1-5a, 6-7

Matthew 25:1-13

Mark 15:33-37

Mark 16:1-8

Luke 22:39-46

Luke 23:42-43

Luke 24:1-8

John 6:37-40

John 14:1-6, 23, 27

LITANY OF THE SAINTS

When the condition of the dying person calls for the use of brief forms of prayer, those who are present are encouraged to pray the Litany of the Saints—or at least some of its invocations—for him or her. Special mention may be made of the patron saints of the dying person, of the family, and of the parish. The litany may be said or sung in the usual way. Other customary prayers, also, may be used.

Lord have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Holy Mary, Mother of God.

Holy angels of God,...

Abraham, our father in faith,...

David, leader of God's people,...

All holy patriarchs and prophets,...

Saint John the Baptist,...

Saint Joseph,...

Saint Peter and Saint Paul,...

Saint Andrew,...

Saint John,...

Saint Mary Magdalene,...

Saint Stephen,...

Saint Ignatius,...

Saint Lawrence,...

Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity,...

Saint Agnes,...

Saint Gregory,...

Saint Augustine,...

Saint Athanasius,...

Saint Basil,...

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Pray for him (her).

Saint Martin, **Pray for him (her).**
Saint Benedict,...
Saint Francis and Saint Dominic,...
Saint Francis Xavier,...
Saint John Vianney,...
Saint Catherine,...
Saint Teresa,...

Other saints may be included here.

All holy men and women,...
Lord, be merciful, **Lord, save your people.**
From all evil,...
From every sin,...
From Satan's power,...
At the moment of death,...
From everlasting death,...
On the day of judgment,...
By your coming as man,...
By your suffering and cross,...
By your death and rising to new life,...
By your return in glory to the Father,...
By your gift of the Holy Spirit,...
By your coming again in glory,...
Be merciful to us sinners; **Lord, hear our prayer.**
Bring **N.** to eternal life,
first promised to him (her) in Baptism,...
Raise **N.** on the last day,
for he (she) has eaten the Bread of life,...
Let **N.** share in your glory,
for he (she) has shared in
your suffering and death;...

Jesus, Son of the living God, **Lord, hear our prayer.**
 Christ, hear us. **Christ, hear us.**

Lord Jesus,
 hear our prayer. **Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.**

PRAYER OF COMMENDATION

When the moment of death seems near, the following prayer
 may be said:

I commend you, my dear brother (sister),
 to almighty God
 and entrust you to your Creator.
 May you return to him
 who formed you from the dust of the earth.
 May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints
 come to meet you as you go forth from this life.
 May Christ, who was crucified for you,
 bring you freedom and peace.
 May Christ, who died for you,
 admit you into his garden of paradise.
 May Christ, the true Shepherd,
 acknowledge you as one of his flock.
 May he forgive all your sins
 and set you among those he has chosen.
 May you see your Redeemer face to face
 and enjoy the vision of God for ever.

R. Amen.

The Holy Rosary (pp.411 ff.) or the Hail Holy Queen (p.451)
 may be prayed.

ACCEPTANCE OF DEATH (see p.74)