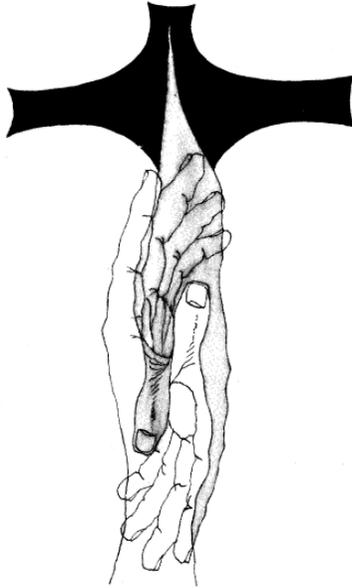


St Matthew's
Westminster



*A Guide to Leading
Intercessions at the
Sunday Mass*

Thank you very much for offering to lead the Prayers of the People at the Sunday Mass. Hopefully you will find this guide helpful in preparing for this important ministry.

There is an important difference between private prayer and corporate intercession. In the Prayers of the People we are leading the people in prayer and not praying in front of them. In acting as an Intercessor in public worship one is bringing before God the prayers of the people gathered together. It is a vitally important element in the offering of the Mass, in which we bring all we are to God and are blessed by all he gives to us.

For this corporate prayer to happen effectively, the congregation will be praying along the lines that you lay before them, and extending them as individual hearts and minds engage with the topics for prayer. It is important that they hear what you are praying, so those leading intercessions need to be audible, and to speak clearly and slowly.

The Prayers of the People are:

- 1 Intercession for the world in which we live and concerns for the whole human family.
- 3 Prayer for the local and wider church and community.
- 4 Representative but brief.
- 5 Intended to challenge people to continue to pray about these issues.
- 6 A response to the church season and theme for the day.

Preparation

What matters is that you pray for wisdom and guidance before you start writing the prayers, remembering that prayer is a gift from God. St Paul says, *'The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.'* (Romans 8. 26-27).

Prayer is more than what we do, it is what God does in and through us.

The Kalendar and Lectionary readings (available on the church website) will provide an insight into the themes that are likely to be explored in the sermon and hymns. Think about the week's news and other ongoing world, national and local issues, but don't make the Intercessions a news bulletin! The Oremus list will be on the lectern each Sunday with a note of the names of the sick and suffering, the recently departed, the Year's Mind (anniversaries of deaths) and the particular prayer intention from the wider Anglican Communion.

Format

There are number of different formats that we use regularly at St Matthew's, and copies of these are available for you to use if you wish. Across the various formats there is a progression in the prayers as listed below. If you wish to write your own prayers rather than use a set form, do think about the structure, and make sure you keep to the order that follows. It is not appropriate to use formal complete prayers during the Intercession.

Structure of the Intercession

1 **An invitation to prayer.**

This will usually be said by the Celebrant, and will include the response that is to be used. It is important therefore to let the priest know in advance which response you will be using. If you wish to use another response to those listed below (p3), please let the office know in good time so it can be printed on the service sheet.

2 **Prayer for the wider world.**

3 **Prayer for our national life.**

It is appropriate to pray for those holding public office (The Queen, Government, etc).

4 **Prayer for the Church.**

It is important to pray each Sunday for the Archbishop and Bishop of London, usually in the form of *We pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard, our Bishop.*

On occasions, after praying for the Archbishop and Bishop, it is appropriate to pray for the leaders of the other churches, usually in the following form – *We pray for Pope Francis; Bartholomew the Ecumenical Patriarch; Tawadros Pope of the Coptic Church, and the leaders of the Reformed Churches.*

5 **Prayer for our local community and parish.**

Those who live, work and visit in our parish, including the staff and children of St Matthew's School.

6 **Prayer for the sick and suffering.**

Please make sure you read the names on the Oremus list exactly as written, and so including surnames where listed. It is not appropriate to mention specific details concerning a person's need unless that is specifically requested.

When praying for those in need never use the phrase *We pray for those who have asked for our prayers*. We pray for them because that is what we should do, and not because of any request they have made.

7 **Prayer for the departed.**

Again please read the names of the recently departed from the Oremus list, followed by those whose Year's Mind falls during the week. It is appropriate to end the prayers for the departed with the following responses, which the congregation will know.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord.

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

May they rest in peace.

And rise in glory.

8 **Conclusion**

It is common practice to invoke the prayers of the saints with whom we share our worship. Several forms are offered in the sets of intercessions. The priest will then offer a concluding collect, or say *Merciful Father* which has a congregational response.

For each of the areas for prayer above, it is appropriate to add one or two brief sentences to highlight the specific areas for prayer. By keeping each section of the prayers brief and to the point, a natural rhythm is created that supports the congregation in being involved in the praying.

Responses

There are set responses that we use regularly at St Matthew's, as follows –

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Silence

It may be appropriate at some point in the Intercession to suggest a short period of silence as this can enable the congregation (and you!) to gather their thoughts.

Some Practical Thoughts

It is helpful to arrive by 10.45am in order to read over the Oremus list at the lectern.

Please move to the lectern towards the end of the Creed – a good time to move is when we say '*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.*' Make sure you are in place at the lectern before the end of the Creed.

When standing at the lectern, it is helpful to make sure the microphone is pointing directly towards you in order to pick up the sound effectively.

When offering the prayers during the service, do speak in a clear voice using a relaxed pace and allowing a short pause before introducing the response.

Some Final Thoughts

These are intercessions, not an essay for you to prove to God / the congregation / the Vicar your theological understanding. Intercessions can be thematically related to the Gospel for the day, but remember there is only one sermon!

Be consistent in the way you address God – God / Father / Lord. Normal practice is for intercession to be offered to God the Father. The priest will often introduce the Intercession with the invocation *In the power of the Spirit, and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.* As we use the contemporary rite of Mass, avoid using archaic forms such as *thee / thou.*

Less is more! Avoid over complication.

If you have any questions about leading the Intercession, please speak to one of the clergy.

Thank you for helping with this important ministry.