

Understanding the Mass Prayers of the Faithful

*Each week, we are explaining a different part of the Mass - the items that are used, the parts of the church, and the roles of the people who help us celebrate Mass. This week, our topic is the **Prayers of the Faithful**.*

The Liturgy of the Word comes to an end with the **Prayers of the Faithful**, also known as the Bidding Prayers (*biddan* is an Old English word, meaning “to pray”).

While we can't have a conversation with God like we do with our families and friends, God is always listening to us when we pray to Him. We can share things with Him, thank Him for the good things in our lives, and ask Him to intercede for us - to act on our behalf.

We do this in a special way during the Prayers of the Faithful, which is one of the most ancient parts of the Mass. In 155 (less than two hundred years after Jesus was born) Saint Justin Martyr described this part of the Mass in his writings: “Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves...and for all others, wherever they may be”.



The tradition of praying for others goes back even further. In the Acts of the Apostles, when Saint Peter was imprisoned by King Herod, the early Christians all prayed for him. And Saint Paul writes in his letter to Timothy “I urge (encourage) that prayers, intercessions (requests) and thanksgiving (gratitude) be made for all men, for kings and those who are in high positions”.

In the Prayers of the Faithful, we ask God to help us become who He is calling us to be. We pray that our congregation is like the Body of Christ, a body at peace, with shelter for the homeless, healing for the sick, and food for the hungry.

We also pray for the Church, for nations and their leaders, for people in special need all around the world, and for the local needs of our parish.

The Prayers of the Faithful are led by the reader, and the congregation will respond together with a response such as, “Lord, hear our prayer” or “Lord graciously hear us”.

We are also given an opportunity to pray for the intentions in our heart - and in our parishes, we are invited to pray for the intentions of our prayer partners as well.

Who did you pray for especially at Mass today? _____