

pray, praise, and give thanks

A Collection of Litanies, Laments,
and Thanksgivings at Font and Table

GAIL RAMSHAW

 AUGSBURG FORTRESS

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praying together

Each Sunday and throughout the week, Christians assemble as Mater Ecclesia—mother church. She stands in *orans*, opening her palms in praise and petition to God, and extending her arms to embrace the community. As she—that is, the assembly—prays, so we come to believe.

Because of the import of this worship, Christians are intentional about the content and quality of their communal prayers. In some denominations, the desire for excellent prayer has meant that only those texts that have been officially crafted and ecclesially authorized are acceptable for use in the liturgy. On the other hand, some denominations judge that the very process of the prior printing of a prayer restricts the Holy Spirit, and so all corporate prayers at public worship are to be extemporaneous.

Some denominations, including most Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and united Protestant communions, are between the ends of this continuum. These churches or their publishing houses dedicate considerable

energy into crafting, approving, and distributing prayers for worship, while also allowing, perhaps even encouraging, local assemblies to adapt official prayers or to craft new prayers appropriate to the specific liturgical setting. It is especially for the assemblies in these denominations that the prayers in *Pray, Praise, and Give Thanks* are offered. For other denominations, these texts can provide inspiration.

This collection includes three categories of prayers: litanies and laments for a variety of worship situations, including a template for the Sunday intercessions; thanksgivings at the font of baptism; and thanksgivings at the table of holy communion. Because many denominations maintain the classic Western tradition of assembly prayer, these texts utilize historic outlines, familiar biblical references, and well-known responses. The usual practice of including the biblical narrative of the last supper within the text of the eucharistic prayers has been retained.

Yet these prayers are situated outside the usual ecclesial style of prose. Many of these prayers include diverse images of God. Each prayer attempts something new, an idea beyond the agenda of overworked committees, or an expression of a current theological proposal. One example of such an innovation deals with the matter of address: In the standard liturgical texts of the Western church, it has been traditional to address prayers to God the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Some prayers in this collection adopt a pattern more usual in the Eastern church, in which the whole Trinity is addressed in liturgical prayer.

Who am I, a Lutheran laywoman, to craft these prayers? In 1965 I complained to my university's chaplain about some Sundays' intercessions and soon after was hired to prepare prayers for collegiate worship. In the fifty years since, I have crafted many prayers, and the approval and encouragement that I have received have persuaded me to seek publication of this selection of texts. Many of these prayers have been improved by the suggestions made by colleagues and friends or were altered after first use in worship.

A CD-ROM has been bound into the back of this book so that with ease and accuracy you can insert these copyrighted prayers into your leader's binder. If you choose to print prayers in service folders, please consider replacing sections of the texts with ellipses, thus keeping assembly worship from becoming an exercise in reading. Perhaps only cue lines need to be provided. In some prayers, the assembly's response repeats the presider's words, and for these phrases, whether spoken or sung, only a beckoning gesture from the presider is necessary. Respect for the author and adherence to the law remind users to cite this source somewhere in any disseminated text. One advantage of not distributing a printed text is that the prayers can be more freely adapted for your community and its needs. In this

volume, explanatory material, rubrics, and fill-ins are indicated in italics. Brackets denote optional passages. Assembly responses are printed in bold type.

In 1960 my confirmation verse was Psalm 34:3: “Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD; let us exalt God’s name together.” Welcome to this collection of prayers. May it supplement your resources and enrich the worship of your assembly.

Litany of Praise for Creation

This litany is inspired by the poem in Genesis 1.

Glory to you, O God:
you speak a word of power,
and so you create the world.

We praise you, O God:
We praise you, O God.

For the Spirit hovering to bring forth life,
for the earth ordered from chaos,
and for light and dark,
we bless you, O God:
We bless you, O God.

For the cosmos beyond our earth,
for the sky above our heads,
and for the cycle of evening and morning,
we exalt you, O God:
We exalt you, O God.

For the seas, the lakes, and the rivers,
for the land with its mountains and plains,
and for the trees, the plants, and their fruits,
we magnify you, O God:
We magnify you, O God.

For the sun to rule the day,
for the moon to brighten the night,
and for the shining stars,
we extol you, O God:
We extol you, O God.

For the fish in the sea,
for the birds of the air,
and for the monsters in the deep,
we glorify you, O God:
We glorify you, O God.

Thanksgiving for the Waters of Baptism

We bless you, almighty God, for the gift of water—
for the oceans that surround the earth,
for the rivers that nurture the land,
for local bodies of water that you provide for our community—
we bless you, O God, for the waters of earth:

We bless you, O God, for the waters of earth.

We honor you, merciful God, for showering us with water—
for the rain that nourishes the plants and trees,
for the floods that restore the fields,
for the dew that freshens dry places—
we honor you, O God, for the waters you send:

We honor you, O God, for the waters you send.

We glorify you, gracious God, for the waters of baptism—
for the water of the Jordan that washed our Lord Jesus,
for the water that baptized the believers on Pentecost,
for the water that illumines us with your Word,
for the water that pours out the gifts of the Spirit,
for the water that bathes the church universal—the Orthodox, Roman Catholics,
Protestants, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, independents—
we glorify you, O God, for the waters of baptism:

We glorify you, O God, for the waters of baptism.

We worship you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
almighty, merciful, and gracious.
Well of forgiveness, you revive us,
Cup of cold water, you refresh us,
Pool of rebirth, you renew us.

To you comes the worship of all your people, now and forever:

To you comes the worship of all your people, now and forever.

Amen.

Amen.

For Trinity Sunday: Triple Praise

This expansive Triple Praise is appropriate for Trinity Sunday and for other high festivals. Note that as formatted, the first section replaces the proper preface.

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!

Before all that is, you were God.

Outside all we know, you are God.

After all is finished, you will be God.

Archangels sound the trumpets,

Angels teach us their song,

Saints pull us into your presence.

And this is our song:

Holy, holy, holy . . .

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!

You beyond the galaxies,

You under the oceans,

You inside the leaves,

You pouring down rain,

You opening the flowers,

You feeding the insects,

You giving us your image,

You carrying us through the waters,

You holding us in the night;

Your smile on Sarah and Abraham,

Your hand with Moses and Miriam,

Your words through Deborah and Isaiah,

You lived as Jesus among us,

Healing, teaching, dying, rising,

Inviting us all to your feast.

In the night in which he was betrayed he took bread, and gave thanks,
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.