



Praying Together, Praying Apart

*At-Home Prayers for
Times of Healing, Illness, and Death*



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

Introduction

Two Stories and a New Reality



Healing, illness, and death are all deeply relational. While the specific realities of these difficult experiences vary, each reveal something about interconnectedness. Consider the accounts of Jesus' healing throughout the Gospels. One of the most memorable of these stories comes from Luke's Gospel where Jesus heals a woman with a hemorrhage and raises Jairus's daughter from the dead (Luke 8:40-56).

Luke's insertion of one healing story within another provides an opportunity to look at Jesus' healing in two very different situations. First, the woman with a hemorrhage is surrounded by a great number of people when she was healed, so much so that the crowds almost crushed Jesus. People were everywhere and the community was bustling and vibrant. You can almost imagine the sights, sounds, and smells of a such a huge gathering of people. The second healing in this passage, however, seems much different. Rather than bursting crowds there is a quiet stillness that surrounds Jesus' interaction with Jairus's daughter. When he arrived at the house, Jesus instructed the crowds to stay behind and prevented them from entering. Even so, this healing is just as significant as the first. Jesus is present with the person, and there is a sense of authentic connection even without the throngs of people.

Today's reality of the COVID-19 virus forces us to grapple with a difficult reality. Amid self-isolation and "stay-at-home" orders, an increasing number of people are experiencing sickness and death while separated from other people. This is a painful reality, one that forces us to view and live these experiences differently. How can we be spiritually present to those who are sick and dying when we cannot be with them physically? How do we support caregivers and healthcare professionals during these difficult times? How can we support holistic healing of body, mind, and spirit from afar? This resource strives to offer some concrete ways to pray, heal, and grieve together when we are physically apart:

- Part I: Prayers of Comfort, Hope, and Healing
- Part II: Lucernarium for Healing
- Part III: Rosary for Healing with Luke the Evangelist
- Part IV: At-Home Service of Prayer when Someone Has Died

Part 1 Prayers of Comfort, Hope, and Healing

These texts can be prayed by individuals, families, or other groups.

Prayer to Christ the Healer

Loving God,
you know us so intimately
that our needs are no surprise to you.
Even so, we bring them before you,
confident that you hear us when we cry out,
and assured that you do not forsake or abandon us.

During these times of sickness and social distancing,
even the most firm and unshakable realities
seem less secure and stable.
Footholds of confidence shift like sand
as we cling to what we think will hold us.

Remind us, Lord, that only you hold us,
cradling us in your arms,
and inviting us to rest.

Remind us, Lord, that you are present
in the pain and suffering of our sisters and brothers,
and that you hear the pain
of these members of your family.

Remind us, Lord, that even when we cannot
be physically present to each other,
we are still there gazing with love
and holding our own with outstretched hands.

For it is your hands that hold,
your hands that heal,
your embrace that warms,
and your voice that soothes like balm.

Christ the Healer, hear us.
Hear us and tend to the needs
of the bodies, minds, and spirits of those who are sick.
For we are confident in your presence
and the unity and connection that come from you alone.

Prayer of Gratitude

Thank you, Lord, for the gifts you share so freely with us.
Help us to acknowledge these gifts
so that we can be ever more aware of your abiding presence.

Thank you, Lord, for the people in our lives,
bearers of your love and made in your image,
so that we can grow in community and grace.

Thank you, Lord, for the crosses we bear,
daily struggles and difficult realities
that remind us of your victory over sadness and death.

Thank you, Lord, for the rising of the sun,
portraits of dawn and the glory of new days
that illumine our daily path and shine through the dark.

Thank you, Lord, for labor and work and rest,
for days and weeks and seasons,
for *kairos*, your time.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you.

Resurrection Litany

When faith outweighs despair . . . This is resurrection day!
When hope banishes darkness . . . This is resurrection day!
When love challenges us to grow . . . This is resurrection day!

When fevers break and health is restored . . . This is resurrection day!
When violence gives way to peace . . . This is resurrection day!
When rain falls and raises new life from the earth . . . This is resurrection day!

When closed hearts crack open and bleed love . . . This is resurrection day!
When self-centeredness falls to solidarity . . . This is resurrection day!
When ageism and sexism and racism bow to authentic inclusion . . . This is resurrection day!

When community grows from isolation . . . This is resurrection day!
When justice is cultivated instead of ignored . . . This is resurrection day!
When humility allows us to embrace a common humanity . . . This is resurrection day!

When forgiveness builds bridges . . . This is resurrection day!
When prophets speak truth in the face of discrimination . . . This is resurrection day!
When life conquers death . . . This is resurrection day!

Healing Prayer to the Spirit

Breathe in us, Holy Spirit, when our bodies ache,
when our arms are sore from holding the Body of Christ,
when our shoes wear through from walking with others.

Breathe in us, Holy Spirit, when our hearts ache,
when we are numb from grief or sadness,
when pain and anguish force us into ourselves.

Breathe in us, Holy Spirit, when our souls ache,
when you feel so far away from the reality of our world,
when we struggle to trust that God is with us.

Prayer During Experiences of Loss

Lord Jesus,
you wept at the death of your friend, Lazarus.
You know the pain of loss,
the hurt that tears through
our hearts like a sword.

Remind us that it is okay to cry,
to feel anger, to question your presence.

Hold us close to you.
Let us feel your calming hand
and the warmth of your embrace.

Let us know the clear, quiet strength
you showed as you spoke with Martha and Mary.
Speak that same peace to us today.

Prayer for Someone Who Has Died

Hold (name) close to you,
let (name) know the glory of your presence,
the reality of the Resurrection,
and the peace that comes only from death and life in you.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.

Part II

Lucernarium for Healing



Lucernarium, or “service of light,” grows out of the tradition in the early church of lighting lamps for evening prayer. This celebration of light rejoices in Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, the Light no darkness can overcome.

Find a comfortable space to gather and dim the lights. Place a single lit candle in the middle of the group.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ, the Lord. Alleluia!

All: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Leader: We thank you, God, for Jesus Christ, our Light:
the Light that springs from darkness,
the Light that flows from death.
As we gather this evening we rejoice in you,
for we no longer need to search for light
to sustain us through the night.
Instead we sing your praises,
shouting “Alleluia!” and celebrating your triumph
over sadness and death.

Be with us this night. Be with us always.

All: Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

Reading: Luke 5:17-26 (*The Healing of a Paralytic*)

Silent Reflection and Open Sharing

Take a few moments to reflect on this Gospel passage. Consider the following questions:

- 1. What words and images stand out to you?*
- 2. What does this story reveal about Jesus?*
- 3. How does this story influence your understanding of healing?*

Litany for Healing

We pray this Litany of Healing for all in need of God's tender mercy and care.

If you are praying for a specific person or persons in need of healing, feel free to share their names and adapt the response to: Hold them, hear them, heal them, God of life and love.

When darkness seems insurmountable . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When sadness steals our joyful moments . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When sickness changes our way of life . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When isolation keeps us from community . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When desolation makes us feel unlovable . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When words fail to convey our deepest needs . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When fear clouds our minds with uncertainty . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When frailty causes our bodies to ache . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When we are anxious and worried about our health . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

When we do not know what to do or how to respond . . . Hold us, hear us, heal us, God of life and love.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Gathering these prayers together, as well the prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts, we pray in the words that Jesus taught us. We remember especially all who are ill and suffering in body, mind, or spirit and all healthcare professionals who continue to give of themselves for the healing of others.

All: Our Father . . .

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving God,
you are the Light that illumines the darkness of our world.
Shed your light freely upon us so that we may bask
in the healing comfort that comes from you.
Bless all who are sick and suffering that they too
may know the light of your promise.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

All are invited to share a sign of Christ's peace.

Closing Prayer: **Prayer to Christ the Healer**

Loving God,
you know us so intimately
that our needs are no surprise to you.
Even so, we bring them before you,
confident that you hear us when we cry out,
and assured that you do not forsake or abandon us.

During these times of sickness and social distancing,
even the most firm and unshakable realities
seem less secure and stable.
Footholds of confidence shift like sand
as we cling to what we think will hold us.

Remind us, Lord, that only you hold us,
cradling us in your arms,
and inviting us to rest.

Remind us, Lord, that you are present
in the pain and suffering of our sisters and brothers,
and that you hear the pain
of these members of your family.

Remind us, Lord, that even when we cannot
be physically present to each other,
we are still there gazing with love
and holding our own with outstretched hands.

For it is your hands that hold,
your hands that heal,
your embrace that warms,
and your voice that soothes like balm.

Christ the Healer, hear us.
Hear us and tend to the needs
of the bodies, minds, and spirits of those who are sick.
For we are confident in your presence
and the unity and connection that come from you alone.

Part IV

At-Home Service of Prayer when Someone Has Died

One of the realities of social distancing is the inability to gather as a community for wakes, funerals, and other memorial services when someone has died. This service of prayer is intended to give people a way to pray in their own homes as they grieve the loss of a loved one.

Place a lit candle, a crucifix, and a bowl of holy water (if available) on a table near where all are gathered for prayer. You may wish to cover the table with a white cloth, a reminder of baptism and new life in Christ.

Introductory Rite

Leader: The Lord is with us. Alleluia!

All: The Lord is truly with us. Alleluia!

Leader: We gather in a spirit of prayer and community as we remember Christ's promise to prepare a place in his house for those who follow him. Though our hearts are heavy with sadness, we trust in this promise and the life that comes from Jesus, who has broken the bonds of death forever. Through the waters of baptism, our sister/brother (name) entered into this mystery. We, too, celebrate and participate in Christ's death and resurrection through our own Initiation. We recall the significance of this new life in Christ as we sign ourselves with holy water.

All are invited to sign themselves with holy water.

Let us pray.

O God, who loved us into being
and chose us for yourself,
give us the courage to live our baptism,
visible signs of your promise
and reminders of Christ's victory over death.
Like our sister/brother (name),
may our commitment to life in you
shine forth in our words and actions.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

Proclaim one or more of the following psalms and Gospels, allowing silence after each. You may wish to invite those present to share aloud how God is speaking to them through the reading.

Suggested Scripture:

Psalmody

- Psalm 1
Blessed Are They Who Hope in the Lord
- Psalm 23
The Lord Is My Shepherd
- Psalm 27
The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation
- Psalm 91
Held in the Wings of God's Embrace
- Psalm 107
God's Saving Work in Times of Distress

Gospels

- Matthew 5:1-12a
The Beatitudes
- Matthew 25:31-40
Works of Mercy
- John 10:1-18
The Good Shepherd
- John 11:1-44
The Raising of Lazarus
- John 14:1-14
Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

Resurrection Litany

The leader might begin each phrase, with all responding, "This is resurrection day!"

When faith outweighs despair . . . This is resurrection day!

When hope banishes darkness . . . This is resurrection day!

When love challenges us to grow . . . This is resurrection day!

When fevers break and health is restored . . . This is resurrection day!

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When justice is cultivated instead of ignored . . . This is resurrection day!

When humility allows us to embrace a common humanity . . . This is resurrection day!

When forgiveness builds bridges . . . This is resurrection day!

When prophets speak truth in the face of discrimination . . . This is resurrection day!

When life conquers death . . . This is resurrection day!

General Intercessions

Leader: For who and what shall we pray today?

All are invited to share prayer intentions aloud. It would be appropriate to pray for the deceased by name, as well as any family members, friends, or caretakers that you wish to remember.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Gathering these prayers together,
as well as those we hold in the silence of our hearts,
we pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father . . .

Final Prayer

Leader: As we conclude our service of prayer, we pray these words together.¹

All: May the choirs of angels lead (name) into paradise,
where the saints and martyrs will welcome her/him,
and lead her/him to the eternal city, the new Jerusalem,
where with Lazarus, she/he will have eternal rest.

Leader: Eternal rest grant unto her/him, O Lord.

All: And let perpetual light shine upon her/him.

Leader: May her/his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

All: Amen.

All are invited to share a sign of Christ's peace.

1. based on the traditional *In Paradisum (Into Paradise)*