



MADISON DIOCESAN  
EUCCHARISTIC  
CONGRESS

## Prayer Intercessors at the Congress

**O**ur times need the peace and strength of intercessory prayer. And although “*there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5b-62), He uses us to intercede on His behalf. Likewise, St. Paul urges “*that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life...*”. (1 Timothy 2:1, 2b)

We will be **prayer intercessors** with and for others—one-on-one—at the Eucharistic Congress (Sept. 29-Oct. 1) during the **Conversion Call** periods: Friday evening, and Saturday morning and afternoon.

Intercessors will be called up after each speaker, making themselves available to anyone who needs to talk about the faith and the Eucharist, or who simply needs our prayers. To many, we will be the first contact, a *spiritual triage*, before the petitioner goes to Confession, spiritual direction, or Adoration.

### Pray in the Holy Spirit.

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*“[The] Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts of men, 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)*

Have you ever prayed the Rosary by habit, moving through the words when your mind was on something else? Have you ever prayed Evening Prayer because you felt obligated to do it, but you prayed it too late and too tired to be sincere? Those prayers were **recited**, but they weren't **prayed**, *not from the heart*.

Maybe that's the best we could do under the circumstances. And it might even hold merit as an act of sacrifice in our state of fatigue. But is it the **best** we can give God?

Sometimes, we might become tongue-tied in spontaneous prayer in front of people. Maybe, we try too hard to create a reasoned, coherent prayer to begin a group meeting. Or we might stand before someone who is in great distress, and futilely search for comforting words to reassure them. Why do we struggle? Why is it so difficult?

We might experience the same problem when we try to testify to truth, to our love for God. A thousand thoughts and words race through our minds. We want to say just the right thing to defend truth and to help in a soul's conversion, but we fall back on a few well-worn phrases. What happened?

## Be still.



*Sacred Heart, Pompeo*

When we depend entirely on ourselves in prayer, it can be a struggle. **We** formed it and left the **Holy Spirit** out. It resembles the difference between meditation, where **we** do most of the work, and contemplation, where **God** does **all** of the work.

We might take Moses' advice as he led the Israelites out of Egypt. The people feared Pharaoh's approaching army. They complained to

Moses, saying, “*It would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.*” But then, Moses said,

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*“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today.... **The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still.**” (Ex 14:12b-14)*

To be **still** is to be trusting, faithful, and resolute. God is provident. The Holy Spirit will not leave you alone. “*The Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.*” And He waits for our cooperation. But before we act, our work is to be docile and receptive to His will.

### **Be humble.**

When we recognize our weakness, when we finally see that “*we do not know how to pray as we ought,*” then we arrive at the **humility** we need to draw close to God and to seek the Holy Spirit’s help.

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*“All good prayer starts **in** the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit initiates the movement of God in our hearts. ... He awakens within us the desire to encounter God—to talk with Him. (11-12) ... Therefore, our first step toward Him is always a response to His initial invitation.” (13, Unleashing)*

Spontaneous prayer draws from the deep well of daily, ongoing prayer with Jesus, making it natural and heart-felt. And it lifts our reasoned testimony to a confession of love, speaking from the depths of our open hearts.

### **Be a child of God.**

The Holy Spirit does not merely inform us; He *transforms* us. We are not students but children of God. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force,...but the *Soul of our soul* Who loves us. It is difficult to imagine any other kind of God than the God Who is Love.

The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, Divine Love, into our souls at Baptism as a living testimony to God’s *love* for us, to make His *home* in us. The thought of God transforming us to live His divine life with Him—of His undivided attention to the state of each individual soul—should always *thrill* and *humble* us.

## Pray from the heart.

When we pray—alone or with others—take time to place ourselves in the Holy Spirit’s presence. Know that He dwells deep within our hearts. Find Him there, listen, and speak to Him *from* our hearts:



*Sacred Heart, Pompeo*

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*“The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; ... the place ‘to which I withdraw’. The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God, we live in relation: it is the place of covenant” (CCC2563).*

In meditation, be still. Begin in silence, then say a prayer to the Holy Spirit in preparation:

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*“O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore You, enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me, inflame my heart; tell me what I ought to do; give me Your commands. I promise to submit myself to whatever You ask of me, and to accept whatever you permit to happen to me. Grant only that I may know Your holy will. Amen.”*

Likewise, in intercessory prayer, be still, then utter a short, silent prayer to the Holy Spirit. Feel free to use your own words:

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*“Holy Spirit, help me to say the words You form in my heart, for Your glory and for the salvation of souls. Amen.”*

With the Holy Spirit’s infused virtues and grace, we can live for Jesus Christ and others rather than for ourselves. We can be intercessors, praying for the glory of God and for the one who needs our prayers.

## As intercessor prayer grows, self-love fades.

When we pray for others, our self-love grows weak, and we grow in holiness. The obstruction to grace dissolves. According to Pope

Benedict XVI, *“this is a sign of true prayer, which does not end in us, but opens itself to others...”* (A School of Prayer, 21). So, in the act of praying for others, we grow in holiness and union with God.

## Pray in faith.

Jesus looked for fruit from a fig tree, found none, then made the tree wither immediately. The disciples marveled at Jesus’ power. He answered,



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*“Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea’ it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”*  
(Matt 21-22)

So, we might ask, what is it to have a *“faith that does not doubt”* (CCC2610)? Maybe the question is better framed, *“Why don’t we absolutely trust in God’s power to do what we ask?”* Faith needs an open, docile, trusting heart, a belief that God can do anything, that He is always provident.

## Be open to belief.

For example, if you hear of a miracle, *be open to belief*. If something happened in your life that can only be explained by God’s intervention, *be open to belief*. If your prayers are answered, recognize that God is active in your life, and *be open to belief*. If your prayer is answered in silence or in a way other than you requested, trust in God’s wisdom and be *open to belief*.

Be confident that in faith, Jesus only needs to *“say the word, and [your friend] will be healed.”* **Bring your faith to prayer!**

## Pray for God’s will.

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*“The prayer of faith consists not only in saying ‘Lord, Lord,’ but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father. Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan.”* (CCC2611)

In prayer, we always approach Jesus with one petition that supersedes all others: We pray for God's will. We never insist upon our will, and we never *presume* God's.

Jesus sets the example. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He prayed to the Father in His anguish, He cried out, "*Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will*" (Mk 14:56). He cried out for relief, but in the same breath, He pledged to do His Father's will, to complete His mission of salvation by dying on the Cross. In imitation, we frame our prayers within the greater will of God.

### **Father knows best.**

But sometimes, we or the petitioner might become frustrated and disappointed. A suffering soul asks, "*Why doesn't God hear my prayers? Why is God silent?*" Abbot Marmion reassures us:

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*"Prayer is not a **force** with its first principle in **ourselves**; it is not an effort of the human soul trying to do **violence** to God to make Him change His providential disposition."*

In other words, we don't ask God to lower His will to ours. Instead,

*"We raise our will to the level of His..., [willing] what He had decided to give us, good things useful to our sanctification and salvation. Prayer...is an elevation of our soul to God. ... We begin to will in time what God has willed for us from all eternity." (The Spiritual Life, 200, 203).*

God wants to hear from His loving children. He will not always give us what we **want**, but always, what we **need**, always ordered to our salvation:

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*"If we have not obtained it, that is because we are to be saved without it. Our prayer is not lost; we have not obtained this temporal favor which was useless to us, but we have obtained or will obtain another more precious grace." (206)*

*"We do not know what things are for our good, and for that reason we should always pray...in accordance with God's will and for our own [and others'] spiritual benefit." (238)*

And after we pray, be prepared for three alternatives. According to God's will, some petitions may be granted anyway, "*whether you prayed or not.*" Some petitions "*will never be granted*" regardless of how much you pray. But some petitions will be granted by God only **because** you prayed (Spiritual Theology, Aumann, 237). Yes, our prayers are important.

We know that God may or may not fulfill our temporal petitions in the way that we anticipate. But we also know that God hears and weighs them within the **greater** good, within His plan for that person's eternal soul. So, before we pray for their *temporal* good, pray for what leads them to their *eternal* good: virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, protection from sin and temptation, forgiveness, conversion, or final perseverance. Then, we prayed according to His will.

## Pray in Relationship.

We don't spend time with Jesus Christ in prayer and reading then move on to other enjoyments in isolation from Him. Our relationship with Him is our life's object. We live in a state-of-conversion, a constant movement toward a deeper relationship, a closer union with Him.

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*Since the charity of a Christian should increase until death, any halt in its development [opposes] the law of the love of God. ... If life does not ascend, it descends. The soul cannot live without love. If it fails to make progress in the love of God, it falls back into self-love.*  
(Christian Perfection and Contemplation, Garrigou-Lagrange, 189)



God plants a desire for Him within each soul. Joseph Ratzinger wrote, "*Prayer is centered and rooted in the inmost depths of the person...*" (A School of Prayer, 18). On the one hand, we can ignore that desire; we can grow complacent and even deny it. But we can't *remove* it. On the other hand, when we open our heart to desire God's love, then we've already found Him.

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*“To desire to love God is already to love Him, since God sees the heart and takes into account all our intentions. ... [T]o desire is to seek, and he who seeks finds.” (Matt 8:8) (Lagrange, 418)*

Intercessory prayer reaches out to God and to others. It loves God by loving others, by striving to see His image in their souls. Through intercessory prayer, our personal desire for God ignites that desire in others.

## Pray with compassion and empathy.

The Holy Spirit forms a deep **compassion** and **empathy** for others. He places the intercessor within the petition itself, within the person’s suffering. In this way, the intercessor becomes more Christlike.



*Created by Sylvia Louro*

In 1995, St. Pope John Paul II wrote his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*. In part, he responded to those who chose euthanasia for their loved ones, calling it a *false mercy*. He wrote, “True ‘compassion’ leads to **sharing another’s pain**; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear” (#66). Hospice workers exemplify the virtue of suffering with others.

Likewise, we too, stand in the breach, humbly but fervently working on the petitioner’s behalf as a *beggar before God* (CCC2559).

## Guidelines for Intercessory Prayer

Form a daily prayer life. Then, when you spontaneously pray with someone at the Congress, you draw from an established relationship with God. Within the Conversion Call, try to practice these steps:

1. **Wait for a petitioner to ask you for prayer.** Sit down with him in the pews, separated from others so that your conversation can remain private.
2. **Ask the petitioner to introduce himself; you do the same.**

3. **Ask the petitioner how you can help:** Do you have a question about the faith? How did the Holy Spirit move your heart in the talk? Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? Would you like me to pray for you?
4. **When you pray, first, place yourself in the Holy Spirit's presence.** Your first prayer is for yourself, asking for the grace of the Holy Spirit to "*speak through you*" (Mt 10:20).
5. **Then, pray to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.** Begin by thanking Jesus for His sacrificial presence in the Eucharist, His love, His divine life that we share, and His blessings.
6. **Next, pray for God's will, for the salvation of the soul,** (for virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, for protection from sin and temptation, for forgiveness, conversion, and final perseverance) **and for the specific need.**
7. **Conclude** with, "*We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*"  
*"There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. [Our prayer accesses] the Father only if we pray 'in the name' of Jesus"* (CCC2664).
8. **End with an Our Father, together:** Pray the *Our Father* after your personal prayer. In so doing, you draw the person into prayer as well.
9. **Be confidential.** Do not relate your prayer or conversation with the petitioner to anyone else unless he asks you to expand your prayer to include others.
10. **Persevere.** Make a note of the petition and pray it over the next week or more. Set a specific time each day for intercessory prayers.

## Intercessory Prayer in Scripture

**Matt 5:44:** But I say, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

**Matt 7:7:** Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

**Matt: 18:19-20:** Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

**Matt 21:22:** And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

**Lk 12:11-12:** And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

**Lk 22:32:** Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

**Jn 14:13-14:** Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.

**Jn 15:7:** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

**Jn 16:23-24:** In that day, you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name.

**Acts 7:60:** And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

**Rom 8:26-27:** Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

**Rom 12:12:** Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

**2 Cor. 1:11:** You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.

**Eph 6:18:** Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

**Phil 4:6:** Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.

**Col 1:9-10:** And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

**1 Timothy 2:1, 2b:** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

**James 5:13-16:** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

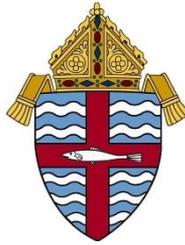
**1 Jn 5:14-15:** And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.

**Heb 7:25:** Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

**Diocese of Madison**

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