

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

O God, your Spirit gathers the church. Shepherd those who are newly baptized and newly ordained in the proclamation of the gospel, breathe life into ecumenical and inter-religious endeavors, and support missionaries throughout the globe. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You created the earth and all its inhabitants and declared it good. Clean polluted skies, seas, and soil, provide nourishment to plants and animals, and make us aware of our impact on the environment. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You call leaders to bridge differences and practice generosity. Inspire all in authority to protect people in harm's way, deliver those in bondage, support fair elections, provide care for military personnel and veterans, and show mercy to those for whom they have responsibility. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 87. Tuesday Romans 11:13-29. Wednesday Matthew 8:1-13. Thursday (Bartholomew, Apostle) John 1:43-51. Friday Ezekiel 31:15-18. Saturday Ezekiel 36:33-38. Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 138; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20.

You provide for those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. Embrace people who have been rejected because of difference, heal trauma caused by racism or prejudice, shield any who are persecuted, console the dying, and heal the sick (especially). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

O God, you journey with us in all of life's transitions. Guide those preparing for baptism, marriage, and retirement. Guide our church council and committees in their visioning and ministry (especially name/s of specific ministries). Safeguard those who travel. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks for those who now rest from their labors (especially Bernard of Clairvaux, whom the church commemorates today). Motivate us by their lives of dedication to the gospel, until that day when we join with them in our eternal home. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**



Celebrate

Sunday, August 20, 2023
12th Sunday after Pentecost

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

Prayer of the Day

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

The prophet calls upon Israel to do justice in view of God's imminent intervention to save. Righteousness and obedience define who belongs to the Israelite community—not race, nationality, or any other category.

Thus says the LORD:
Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—

these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

Let all the peo - ples praise you, O

God, let all the peo - ples praise you.

May God be merciful to ¹ us and bless us;
may the light of God's face ¹ shine upon us.

²Let your way be known ¹ upon earth,
your saving health a- ¹ mong all nations.

³Let the peoples praise ¹ you, O God;
let all the ¹ peoples praise you.

⁴Let the nations be glad and ¹ sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide all the na- ¹ tions on earth. **R**

⁵Let the peoples praise ¹ you, O God;
let all the ¹ peoples praise you.

⁶The earth has brought ¹ forth its increase;
God, our own ¹ God, has blessed us.

⁷May God ¹ give us blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth ¹ stand in awe. **R**

God has not rejected Israel. Rather, the call and gifts of God are irrevocable so that, while all have been disobedient, God has mercy upon all.

[Paul writes:] I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you

were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help.

[[Jesus] called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: ¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." ¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" ¹³He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." ¹⁵But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." ¹⁶Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false wit-

ness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."]

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.