



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 30:
Intercessions
By FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



We likely recognize the phrases “We pray to the Lord” and “Lord hear our prayer” from the General Intercessions at Mass. After the Creed, as a conclusion to the Liturgy of the Word, the community prays together, asking God for various needs. This part of the Mass has several names, including the **Prayer of the Faithful, General Intercessions, Universal Prayer, or Petitions.**

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* teaches, “In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world” (*GIRM*, 69).

Of course, praying together as Christians has been part of our life from the beginning. As Charles Belmonte notes, “To pray for the needs of the Church and of the world is an early Christian custom. St. Paul admonishes Timothy, one of his disciples: ‘First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity.’ (1 Tim 2:1–2)” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 104). Thus, it shouldn’t surprise us that this part of the Mass stretches all the way back to those earliest descriptions of the Mass, including the one by St. Justin Martyr (+165 AD).

The Church United in Prayer

The names “General Intercessions” and “Universal Prayer” instruct us on the composition of these prayers. They are prayed in a general way for wide-ranging needs, typically following a pattern of praying for the needs of the Church, for public authorities and the salvation of the world, for those burdened by any kind of difficulty, and for the local community. Often, the final intercession will include prayers for the deceased. While these prayers are envisioned to be “general,” the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* does note that for a particular celebration like a Confirmation or a wedding, “the series of intentions may be concerned more closely with the particular occasion” (*GIRM*, 70). After the series of petitions, the Prayer of the Faithful ends with the concluding prayer said by the priest, asking God to accept our petitions.

As the name “Prayer of the Faithful” indicates, from the earliest times the baptized members of the congregation (the faithful) took part in this prayer (Those who weren’t yet baptized were dismissed after the readings and homily so that they could further study and prepare to be received into the Church). In a wonderful way, the Prayer of the Faithful highlights one of the great privileges we have as God’s people: being able to join together in asking God for what we need. Having just listened to God’s Word and professed together our Faith through the Creed, we are then standing united together in faith as we ask God for what we need. Jesus has told us that our prayers are powerful when even two agree on what to pray for (Matthew 18:19). Just imagine how powerful our prayer is when the whole Church is joined together in union. It is amazing to think about!