

EARLY CHRISTIAN PRAYERS

These are examples of prayers handed down to us from the first centuries of the Christian Church. There's a lot to be said from studying early prayers such as these as they provide a continuous link of worship between the early Christians of the first few centuries to ourselves. Their content and pattern provide a useful template for the writing of modern prayers:

Look upon us, O Lord, and let all the darkness of our souls vanish before the beams of thy brightness. Fill us with holy love, and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom. All our desire is known unto thee, therefore perfect what thou hast begun, and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer. We seek thy face, turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory. Then shall our longing be satisfied, and our peace shall be perfect. (Augustine, 354 - 430)

We beseech thee, Master, to be our helper and protector. Save the afflicted among us; have mercy on the lowly; raise up the fallen; appear to the needy; heal the ungodly; restore the wanderers of thy people; feed the hungry; ransom our prisoners; raise up the sick; comfort the faint-hearted. (Clement of Rome, 1st Century)

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all, take away from me my sins, and mercifully kindle in me the fire of thy Holy Spirit. Take away from me the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, a heart to love and adore thee, a heart to delight in thee, to follow and to enjoy thee, for Christ's sake. (Ambrose of Milan, c 339 -97)

O good shepherd, seek me out, and bring me home to thy fold again. Deal favourably with me according to thy good pleasure, till I may dwell in thy house all the days of my life, and praise thee for ever and ever with them that are there. (Jerome, c 342 - 420)

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word for a light to shine upon our path; grant us so to meditate on that Word, and to follow its teaching, that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Jerome, c 342 - 420)

May God the Father bless us; may Christ take care of us; the Holy Ghost enlighten us all the days of our life. The Lord be our defender and keeper of body and soul, both now and for ever, to the ages of ages. (Æthelwold c 908-984)

Our God, God of all men God of heaven and earth, seas and rivers, God of sun and moon, of all the stars, God of high mountain and lowly valley, God over heaven, and in heaven, and under heaven. He has a dwelling in heaven and earth and sea things that are in them. He inspires all things, he quickens all things. He is over all things, he supports all things. He makes the light of the sun to shine, He surrounds the moon and the stars, He has made wells in the arid earth, placed dry islands in the sea. He has a Son co-eternal with himself...And the Holy Spirit breathes in them; Not separate are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Patrick c389-461)

Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love; because you have redeemed me, I owe you the whole of myself; because you have promised so much, I owe you my whole being. Moreover, I owe you as much more love than myself as you are greater than I, for whom you gave yourself and to whom you promised yourself. I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know by understanding. I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you. Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of your love. I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love. (Anselm 1033-1109)

O Sovereign and Almighty Lord, bless all thy people, and all thy flock. Give thy peace, thy help, thy love unto us thy servants, the sheep of thy fold, that we may be united in the bond of peace and love, one body and one spirit, in one hope of our calling, in thy divine and boundless love. (Liturgy of St Mark, 2nd century)

Lord, be with us this day, Within us to purify us; Above us to draw us up; Beneath us to sustain us; Before us to lead us; Behind us to restrain us; Around us to protect us. (Patrick c389-461)