



Prayers to Bless Elders

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Thank you for your desire to pray with elders. Rest assured: you don't need any special training! Prayer is simply talking with and listening to God in whatever way works for a particular person.

Typically, if I think an elder would benefit from prayer based on their conversation or mood, I simply ask, "Would you like me to pray for you right now?" I've never had anyone say no.

Several prayers here (marked with *) would work for any faith tradition. Many religious prayers are repeated exactly the same way every time. Other prayers can be made up on the spot. My prayer is that this document provides options for you to bless any elder.

Common Religious Prayers

The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

This prayer is based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:9-13.

Typically Catholic/Orthodox

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
on Earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Typically Protestant

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
on Earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.

Gloria Patri (Glory Be)

This short prayer is often [set to music](#) and used in numerous denominations.

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis*

Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi (though it does not appear in his writings), this is also called the Peace Prayer.

Lord, make me an instrument of your
peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life. Amen.

Serenity Prayer*

Attributed to American theologian Reinhold Nieburh, this simple prayer became well-known after its adoption by recovery programs.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Irish Blessing*

Although its author is unknown, this prayer was originally written in Irish. Its natural images reflect the Holy Spirit (wind) and God's light (sun), as well as God's guidance (road) and provision (rain).

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields and
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand. Amen.

***Suitable for any faith tradition.**

Apostles Creed

This statement of faith covers the roles and blessings of each member of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is used by Catholics and Protestants alike.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of Heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord,
who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and
born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell.
On the third day He rose again.

He ascended into Heaven and is seated at
the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there He shall come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

This longer statement of faith covers the roles and blessings of each member of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is used by Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches, as well as some Anglican and Protestant denominations.

I believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
one in being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven.
By the power of the Holy Spirit
he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate;
he suffered, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the
living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the
giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is adored
and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic
Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of
sins,
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Hail Mary / Ave Maria (Catholic only)

This scripture-based prayer (Luke 1:28, 42) seeks the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Together with the Lord's Prayer, it forms the basis of the Rosary ritual prayers for Catholics. This version uses the traditional language (thee, thou), typically the most familiar form for most elders.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Rosary

The rosary is a Catholic form of contemplative prayer. If you have Catholic residents, they might enjoy holding a set of rosary beads. If so, you could recite a couple of the prayers that are included in the rosary: Our Father and Hail Mary. [Read this](#) if you want more detail on praying the rosary.

(continued)

Unscripted, On-the-Spot Prayers

I often receive requests for prayers that people can use to bless elders with dementia. I love this request! A few things to know:

- You don't have to be a "professional" to pray for someone. You don't even have to share their faith. The gesture alone, with simple words, will affirm and comfort a person with dementia as you help them focus their heart on God.
- Keep it short: 20-30 seconds max.
- Ask permission before touch: "May I place my hand on your shoulder / hold your hand?" Appropriate physical touch can be very comforting during prayer.

Here are some general forms for prayers you can use, but I encourage you to add your own words based on what you know about the person.

Prayer for Protection. *Use this prayer when someone is in distress of any kind.*

Heavenly Father, thank you for being close to [name] right now. As Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble; but take heart, for I have overcome the world."¹ God, please protect [name] from anything that would trouble [his/her] heart today. Please send your comfort and guidance. Help [him/her] to keep [his/her] eyes on You and to remember Your love. Bless [name] now with the peace that passes all understanding.² We pray in your holy name. Amen.

Prayer for Healing. *Use this prayer when someone has a physical ailment.*

Heavenly Father, as the Bible tells us, Jesus went throughout all the land teaching and healing every disease and every affliction.³ Thank you that you care about our physical problems and that you want us to be whole and happy. Please touch and comfort [name] today, and take away any pain or discomfort as quickly as possible. Help [name] to fix [his/her] eyes on you and to receive your comfort. We pray in your holy name. Amen.

Prayer for Blessing (#1). *When it seems like a person would benefit from hearing a word of hope and truth, you can simply ask, "May I bless you right now?"*

[Name,] I bless you in the name of the Lord. May you know God's abundant joy in you today because you are His dear [son/daughter]. May the truth of God's love for you be rooted in your heart. As the scriptures say, nothing in all of creation can separate you from God's love for you in Christ Jesus.⁴ May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.⁵ We pray in your holy name. Amen.

¹ John 16:33

² Philippians 4:7

³ Matthew 9:35

⁴ Romans 8:39

⁵ Romans 15:13

Prayer for Blessing (#2). *Another general blessing prayer.*

[Name,] I bless you in the name of Jesus. I bless you to know the Father's heart for you and the depth of His love. I bless you with the joy of Jesus. I bless you with God's faithfulness, regardless of life's circumstances. I bless you with the peace and power of the Holy Spirit. I bless the plans and purposes God has for your life.⁶ May you always see God's hand and may you flourish in every good work that God has prepared for you. Amen.

Prayer for Accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. *If someone wants to give their life to Christ (become a Christian), you can help that person repeat this prayer in short sections.⁷*

Father God, please receive me as your child. I believe that Jesus made possible the forgiveness of my sins through his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Jesus, I invite you to live in me and guide my life as I trust you as Lord and Savior for all of my days and into eternity. In your name I pray. Amen.

Prayers for the Dying. *If someone is actively dying, ask the Holy Spirit whether to ask family or friends if they would like you to pray for the person and possibly anoint them with oil (making the sign of the cross on their forehead or hand). You can use one or both prayers.⁸*

Option 1: Almighty and merciful God, we commend [name] to you. In your infinite love and mercy, uphold [him/her] by the grace of your Holy Spirit. As I anoint with this oil, grant [name] inward peace, release [him/her] from suffering, and bring [him/her] to everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Option 2: [Name], go forth from this world:
in the love of God the Father who created you,
in the mercy of Jesus Christ who redeemed you,
in the power of the Holy Spirit who strengthens you.
In communion with all the faithful, may you dwell this day in peace. Amen.

⁶ Jeremiah 29:11-12

⁷ It's incredibly important not to force this prayer on anyone. Be prayerful about what the person may want. A traditional "sinner's prayer" is not a specific command in the Bible for salvation; God answers any humble sinner's cry for grace ("Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2:21). Taking Jesus' hand is a daily act of faith, so be prepared to walk alongside any new believer with patience. Adapted from *Nursing Home Ministry: Where Hidden Treasures are Found*, by Bill Goodrich and Tom McCormick, [God Cares Ministry](#)

⁸ Adapted from US Conference of Catholic Bishops [Prayers for Death and Dying](#)