

Dear Friends,

**Today I am doing my monthly column on the Mass.** The topic is the prayer that follows the Profession of Faith.

**The Roman Missal gives two names for this: “*the Universal Prayer*” or “*Prayer of the Faithful*.”** It is “*Universal*” because in these petitions we are to pray for the needs of all the world, not only local or personal needs. It is the “*Prayer of the Faithful*” because it is offered by all the baptized, which is the meaning of the word *faithful*.

**The structure of the Prayer of the Faithful is a litany.** The priest introduces it, inviting all to pray and usually stating the response to make at the end of each petition. Then the deacon or, in his absence, a lector or cantor leads the petitions, with all who are present responding to each.

**The Roman Missal states that this series of petitions is usually to be in the following order:**

- ❖ For the needs of the universal and local Church (usually the Pope and the Archbishop are named)
- ❖ For public authorities or civil leaders (that they will pursue peace, justice, and the common good)
- ❖ For the salvation of the entire world (for respect for people of all religions and for the spread of the gospel)
- ❖ For those burdened in any way (the sick, victims of natural disasters, the unemployed)
- ❖ For the local community (the members of the parish, vocations to the priesthood and religious life, those in the military).

**On the one hand, the more universal and general this prayer is, the better. On the other hand, the more specific it is, such as naming the sick and deceased of the parish, the better.** This prayer is to be inclusive of everyone. It is to be composed by each parish – by a priest, deacon, parishioner or group designated to do this. With the exception of the homily, it is the most freely composed part of the Mass. Virtually all other prayers are set and contained in the Roman Missal.

**The Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful concludes the Liturgy of the Word.** We have listened to the readings from the inspired Word of God: usually a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) or, during the Easter Season, from the Acts of the Apostles; a passage from one of the New Testament letters, most often from Saint Paul; and then the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus for which we stand and sing Alleluia. Following the readings, the priest or deacon has reflected on these passages and applied

them to our own personal life experience. We have responded with our Profession of Faith, either the Nicene or the Apostles' Creed. And finally, we conclude this major part of the Mass by praying the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful as a response to the entire Liturgy of the Word. We have been moved to lift up to God the needs not just of all the faithful, but of all humanity.

I began these monthly columns over one year ago and you may find all of them (now totaling thirteen) by going to the parish website at [www.stmargaret.org](http://www.stmargaret.org), clicking on the Information tab and then clicking on Bulletins. These columns are listed at the top of that page.

I hope that each of you is enjoying some rest and relaxation during these summer months.

Father Mike