

# Praying Together



*“...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”  
(Matthew 18:20)*

These words of Jesus come between instructions to his followers concerning misbehaviour and division among them, and the need to continually forgive those who have done wrong. Before we as Christians can pray together to God, or do *any* work together, we need to be a community of people that are trying to forgive, support and care about each other. It is then that Jesus is present with us when we pray.

Praying together, and indeed all prayer, is about relationships with God and with others. Jesus taught his followers to pray by starting with the words, “*Our Father...*”, not “*My Father*” (*Matt. 6:9*). We are children of the one loving God, bound in Christ to each other and to all God’s creation, human and non-human.

Praying to God is an essential part of the life of Christians. In love we are called to follow Christ by offering ourselves with him in prayer to God on behalf of our world.

As members of the body of Christ, the church, we each have our particular gifts to contribute to the whole. Just like a human body needs its different parts to function properly, we are helped by the support of each other in our work of prayer. We can often benefit from those who are not like us, have other gifts and challenge what we say or believe. In a garden, flowers can be more attractive and healthy when they grow together in a mixture of colours, shapes and sizes!

Praying together is usually thought of as a group of two or more people who gather in a particular place to pray aloud with words or in silence. But prayer can be expressed through singing, dancing, instrumental music, drama or any other art form by one person or a select group. Such prayer, which might be judged as personal prayer or entertainment for onlookers, can be a wonderful experience where one person's prayer develops into communal prayer, and an entertainment becomes a participation by all in an uplifting worship of God.

Christians usually come together in a church building at a particular time on Sundays to pray to God. But praying together can take place anywhere at any time. Whenever we intentionally join with others in prayer, we are praying together, regardless of where we are or what time it is. I suggest that in Christ, all prayer becomes one great act of love.

When we meet to pray or intercede, we obey our call as Christians to serve others by bringing to God the needs of our world, human and non-human. In such prayer we share with Christ in the suffering and joy of others. Sometimes our prayer will be in response to a crisis, such as a terrorist attack, or the news of a loved one's serious illness.

At times we might decide to pray for one person or a group of people who are sick by doing as James directs, *"...call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord"* (James 5:14). Such prayer involves anointing and laying hands on another with prayer for their healing and strengthening. Often the power of the Holy Spirit is felt uniting all those present, surrounding them with God's love.

As part of our Christian life we participate regularly in Holy Communion, or the Eucharist, obeying Jesus' command, *"Do this in remembrance of me"*. At this service we make real Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper on the night

before he died. When we receive and ingest the bread and wine, we unite ourselves to one another by sharing the same food and drink, the very life of Christ. Our participation in the celebration of Holy Communion strengthens and directs us to go out and embody or incarnate Christ in loving actions, serving others in our world.

Some years ago, I participated in a Eucharist with about 40 other people of various denominations and ages crowded into a small sitting room in Melbourne. The priest, visiting from Europe, led the service in a way that seemed to unite us in Christ with the whole world. We prayed with and on behalf of all God's creation!

We are basically social people who, from the moment we are born to when we die, need others to maintain our life. When we pray for one another, we discover this activity contributes to the well-being of *both* givers and receivers.

In all prayer, alone or with others, we follow a loving Christ whose Spirit surrounds, indwells and helps us in our prayer and the actions that flow from it.

*Sister Dr Helen CSC*

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