

Prayers of the Ancient Church

From *The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians (1 Clement)*:

Author: Clement of Rome

Date written: 95-97 AD

59. (2) We . . . ask, with earnest prayer and supplication, that the Creator of the universe may keep intact the specified number of his elect throughout the whole world, through his beloved servant Jesus Christ, through whom he called us from darkness to light, from ignorance to the knowledge of the glory of his name. (3) Grant us, Lord, to hope on your name, which is the primal source of all creation, and open the eyes of our hearts, that we may know you, who alone is "Highest among the high, and remains Holy among the holy." You "humble the pride of the proud"; you "destroy the plans of nations"; you "exalt the humble" and "humble the exalted"; you "make rich and make poor"; you "kill and make alive." You alone are the Benefactor of spirits and the God of all flesh, who "looks into the depths," who scans the works of man; the Helper of those who are in peril, the "Savior of those in despair"; the Creator and Guardian of every spirit, who multiplies the nations upon the earth, and from among all of them have chosen those who love you through Jesus Christ, your beloved Servant, through whom you instructed us, sanctified us, honored us. (4) We ask you, Master, to be "our Helper and Protector." Save those among us who are in distress; have mercy on the humble; raise up the fallen; show yourself to those in need; heal the godless; turn back those of your people who wander; feed the hungry; release our prisoners; raise up the weak; comfort the discouraged. "Let all the nations know that you are the only God," that Jesus Christ is your servant, and that "we are your people and the sheep of your pasture."

60. For you through your works have revealed the everlasting structure of the world. You, Lord, created the earth. You are faithful throughout all generations, righteous in your judgments, marvelous in strength and majesty, wise in creating and prudent in establishing what exists, good in all that is observed and faithful to those who trust in you, merciful and compassionate: forgive us our sins and our injustices, our transgressions and our shortcomings. (2) Do not take into account every sin of your servants and handmaidens, but cleanse us with the cleansing of your truth, and "direct our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and purity of heart," and "to do what is good and pleasing in your sight" and in the sight of our rulers. (3) Yes, Lord, "let your face shine upon us" in peace "for our good," that we may be sheltered "by your mighty hand" and delivered from every sin "by your uplifted arm"; deliver us as well from those who hate us unjustly. (4) Give harmony and peace to us and to all who dwell on the earth, just as you did to our fathers when they reverently "called upon you in faith and truth," that we may be saved, while we render obedience to your almighty and most excellent name, and to our rulers and governors on earth.

61. You, Master, have given them the power of sovereignty through your majestic and inexpressible might, so that we, acknowledging the glory and honor which you have given them, may be subject to them, resisting your will in nothing. Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, harmony, and stability, that they may blamelessly administer the government which you have given them. (2) For you, heavenly Master, King of the ages, give to the sons of men glory and honor and authority over those upon the earth. Lord, direct their plans according to what is good and pleasing in your sight, so that by devoutly administering in peace and gentleness the authority which you have given them they may experience your mercy. (3) You, who alone are able to do these and even greater good things for us, we praise through the high priest and guardian of our souls, Jesus Christ, through whom be the glory and the majesty to you both now and for all generations and forever and ever. Amen.

From *The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (The Didache)*:

Author: Unknown/Anonymous

Date written: 70-100 AD

10. And after you have had enough, give thanks as follows:

(2) We give you thanks, Holy Father,
for your holy name which you
 have caused to dwell in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality
 which you have made known to us
 through Jesus your servant,
to you be the glory forever.

(3) You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake,
and gave food and drink to men to enjoy,
 that they might give you thanks;
but to us you have graciously given
 spiritual food and drink,
and eternal life through your servant.

(4) Above all we give thanks because you are mighty;
to you be the glory forever.

(5) Remember your church, Lord,
to deliver it from all evil
and to make it perfect in your love;
and gather it, the one that has been sanctified,
from the four winds into your kingdom,
which you have prepared for it;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.

(6) May grace come, and may this world pass away.
Hosanna to the God of David.
If anyone is holy, let him come;
if anyone is not, let him repent.
Maranatha! Amen.

For further reading:

Chadwick, Henry. 1967. *The Early Church*. Penguin.

Davidson, Ivor. 2004. *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine, AD 30—312*. Baker.

Haman, A. 1961. *Early Christian Prayers*. Longman, Green, and Co.

Holmes, Michael. 1999. *The Apostolic Fathers; Greek Texts and English Translations*. Baker.

Jefford, Clayton. 1996. *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*. Hendrickson.

Staniforth, Maxwell. 1987. *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*. Penguin.