

## Prayers of the Ancient Church

### Week 2

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

Author: Unknown/Anonymous

Date written: 70-100 AD

8. But do not let your fasts coincide with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday. (2) Nor should you pray like the hypocrites. Instead, "pray like this," just as the Lord commanded in his Gospel:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed by your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debt,  
as we also forgive our debtors;  
and do not lead us into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one;  
for yours is the power and the glory forever.  
(3) Pray like this three times a day.

Matthew 6:5-17 (esp. 6:16); Luke 18:12

### Epitaphs and Inscriptions

*On the tomb of Agape (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD):*

And you, brethren, I beg you, when you come here to pray and you call in your prayers on the Father and the Son, do not forget to spare a thought for Agape. May the God of all power preserve Agape for eternal life.

*On the tomb of Lucifera (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD):*

To Lucifera, gentlest of wives, a gentle reception. Her departure was a great grief to her husband. This inscription was put up to remind the brethren, as they read it, to pray to God for her soul. May she attain purity and holiness and find a welcome with him.

*Prayers to the Dead (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD):*

Anatolius, our first-born,  
ours for a little while,  
pray for us.

Atticus,  
sleep on in peace.  
Untroubled for your own safety,  
take thought for ours;  
pray about our sins.

*A Dead Man's Prayer to the Living* (2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD):

Holy, holy, holy.

Hail to you who still have the consolation  
of seeing the light of our Father  
who is in heaven.

Pray that we may have rest  
in Christ Jesus, our Lord,  
and in his life-giving Spirit.

May you receive the grace  
to spend your lives well before you leave this world;  
for even I, poor thing that I am,  
having lived the short space of life allotted to me,  
possess my share of what God has promised us.

*Inscription of Abercius* (ca. 167 AD):

The citizen of a chosen city, this [monument] I made [while] living, that there I might have in time a resting-place of my body, [I] being by name Abercius, the disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds flocks of sheep [both] on mountains and on plains, who has great eyes that see everywhere. For this [shepherd] taught me [that the] book [of life] is worthy of belief. And to Rome he sent me to contemplate majesty, and to see a queen golden-robed and golden-sandalled; there also I saw a people bearing a shining mark. And I saw the land of Syria and all [its] cities; Nisibis [I saw] when I passed over Euphrates. But everywhere I had brethren. I had Paul ... Faith everywhere led me forward, and everywhere provided as my food a fish of exceeding great size, and perfect, which a holy virgin drew with her hands from a fountain and this it [faith] ever gives to its friends to eat, it having wine of great virtue, and giving it mingled with bread. These things I, Abercius, having been a witness [of them] told to be written here. Verily I was passing through my seventy-second year. He that discerneth these things, every fellow-believer [namely], let him pray for Abercius.

*Inscription by Pectorius of Autun* (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century):

Ichthus-born, divine children of a heavenly father,  
drink with heartfelt reverence God's waters,  
the source of immortality to mortals.

Fortify your soul, Friend, with the ever-flowing waters  
of wisdom, the enriching.

Take the honey-sweet food he offers  
who saves the saints;

eats as a hungry man eats  
of the Ichthus you hold in your hands.

Feed us then, Lord; Savior, feed us, I pray,  
with the Ichthus.

May my mother sleep well, I beg you, Light of the dead.

Ascadius, father, dear to my heart,

and you, sweet mother, you, my brothers,

having the peace of the Ichthus, remember Pectorius.

*Inscriptions on Homes:*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son and Word, lives here. Nothing evil may come inside.

This is the Lord's door.

Those who come through it must be just.

Lord, protect this house

and the people who live in it. Amen.

If God is for us, who is against us?

Glory to him forever.

*On a church:*

The temple Solomon built, you say, was fairer.

In art as fair, but faith makes this one rarer.

For there the Law's thick veil was wrapped about  
what here, being open, stands more plainly out.

His temple shone with veined metallic light:

this, dyed with Christ's own blood, must shine more bright.

Gems, gold, and cedar-wood? In vain they muster:

the cross sheds here a far more holy luster.