

The Prayer of the Faithful - Universal Prayer

St. Justin Martyr in the year 155 AD wrote about the Mass to the Roman Emperor, and he mentions within his writings the following statement where he talks about intercessory prayer (or prayer for other people): "Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves...and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation." We know that intercessory prayer not only just makes sense to us (it is kind and loving to pray for other people), but we also see examples of this type of prayer throughout the Bible. Some examples include the church praying for St. Peter after he was imprisoned in Acts 12:1-7 or St. Paul's encouragement to Timothy where he is directed, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men" in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (see also 1 Thess. 1:2-3 and 2 Cor. 1:11). One of my favorite times during the entire year is during the Good Friday Passion service where after each intercessory prayer for a specific group of people, everyone in the church kneels down for a few seconds to pray for them together on their knees. During these intense moments of silence, we think about Jesus on the Cross on Good Friday, and how He prayed for the entire world and all of history as He was suffering in love for us. Jesus' prayer and sacrifice was soaked intercession, and it is by offering our prayers through Jesus that He can do powerful things through our intercessory prayers for others. May we enter more deeply into the reality of intercessory prayer, and may we ask God today to help us always pray for the people most in need spiritually in our world. We get a chance to do this every single Mass!