

Two Broad Types of Prayer:

1. *Kataphatic* – has content and typically uses words, images, symbols, or ideas
2. *Apophatic* – lacks content and may include breath prayer, body prayer, and types of centering or contemplative prayer, empty of words, resting in the presence of God

Major Categories of Kataphatic Prayer in the Church:

1. Praise (adoration)
2. Thanksgiving
3. Intercession (typically, praying for/on behalf of others)
4. Petition (typically, praying for oneself)
5. Confession

Christ as Intercessor –

Romans 8:34 – “Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised up, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.”

Hebrews 7:25 – “Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

Categories of Intercession from the Book of Common Prayer:

- The Universal Church, its members, and its mission
- The Nation and all in authority
- The welfare of the world
- The concerns of the local community
- Those who suffer and those in any trouble
- The departed

Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (1992) on Intercession:

1. "Intercession is spiritual defiance of what is, in the name of what God has promised. Intercession visualizes an alternative future to the one apparently fated by the momentum of current contradictory forces."
2. "The message is clear: history belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being. . . . Even a small number of people, firmly committed to the new inevitability on which they have fixed their imaginations, can decisively affect the shape the future takes. These shapers of the future are the intercessors, who call out of the future the longed-for new present. . . the reign of God."
3. Intercession "changes the world and it changes what is possible to God. It creates an island of relative freedom in a world gripped by an unholy necessity. A new force field appears that hitherto was only potential. . . An aperture opens in the praying person, permitting God to act without violating human freedom. The change in even one person thus changes what God can thereby do in that world."
4. "When we pray, we are not sending a letter to a celestial White House where it is sorted among piles of others. We are engaged in an act of co-creation, in which one little sector of the universe rises up and becomes translucent, incandescent, a vibratory center of power that radiates the power of the universe. History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being. If this is so, then intercession, far from being an escape from action, is a means of focusing for action and of creating action. By means of our intercessions we veritably cast fire upon the earth and trumpet the future into being."
5. "It is God rather than ourselves who initiates prayer, and it is God's power, not ours, that answers to the world's needs. We are always preceded in intercession. God is always praying within us. . . We join with God in a prayer already going on in us and in the world." (Romans 8:26-27)
6. "Our task in praying is precisely that of giving speech to the Spirit's groanings within us. . . We are to articulate these agonizing longings and let them pass through us to God."
7. "Prayer is not magic; it does not always 'work'. It is not something we do, but a response to what God is already doing within us and the world. Our prayers are the necessary opening that allows God to act without violating our freedom. Prayer is the ultimate act of partnership with God."

. . . from the Rev. Ragan Sutterfield:

“In an economy dominated by market exchange, our prayers for those in any need or trouble call us into a form of economic life beyond exchange. The poor, the sick, the hungry, and the oppressed offer us no reward for our prayers or our care. We receive no thanks for our prayers, no signs of gratitude; all such exchange is disrupted by the secret work of God. We pray without knowing what effect that prayer has. It is given as a gift in an economy of gifts. . . .

And so week after week we pray, we intercede, so that we might pick up our crosses—the intersection of the kingdom of death and the kingdom of God. We ask prayers for those in any need or trouble because we know that when we answer the call to discipleship, they might be us.”

. . . from Br. James Koester, SSJE:

“As Christians, when we use prayer as one of the ways to restore dignity to the least, the last, and the lost; when we use prayer to restore the dignity of order over disorder, the dignity of wholeness over demons, the dignity of health over disease, the dignity of life over death we are engaged in a political activity, for we seek to further God’s work of redemption *by offering our love in intercessory prayer and action, to be used by God for the healing and transformation* [SSJE Rule] of creation, as we ask God to use God’s divine power in this work of redemption. By its nature, then, prayer for others, and ourselves, is political because we are asking God to intervene with power in a particular situation.

. . . from Br. Geoffrey Tristram, SSJE:

“But actually, that verb ‘to make intercession for us’ literally does not mean, making petitions, nor saying any words at all. The Greek word *entunchanein* ‘to make intercession’ means to meet or be with someone, on behalf of another. So when we talk of Jesus making intercession for us to the Father, it’s not Jesus talking to God about us. It is Jesus being intimately close to his Father and carrying us whom he loves, on his heart, and into the heart of God. . . . True intercession. . . is not just a detached impassioned shopping list of the needs of the world, nor is it informing God of something [God] knows already. Rather, it is a profound, loving and costly holding up of others who are on our hearts before God. . . [It] is being with God, with the people on our hearts.”

Helpful Published Resources on Prayer and Intercession:

Blythe, Teresa A., *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times* (Abingdon Press, 2006) [All kinds of prayer, both *kataphatic* and *apophatic* – includes different kinds of body prayers, *lectio divinas*, and ways of doing intercessory prayer]

Seifert, Harvey, *Explorations in Meditation and Comtemplation* (Upper Room, 1981, 1983) [Doesn't seem to be in print any longer, but old copies of this are still to be found. Seifert's emphasis on praying boldly and dangerously, not timidly, is still powerful!]

Vennard, Jane E., *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace* (Jossey-Bass, 2003) [Engaging, modern, and thoughtful – emphasizes “intention” and “attention” – and the nexus of contemplation and action]

Helpful Online Resources for Prayer and Intercession:

<https://pray-as-you-go.org> [Wonderful Jesuit/Ignatian resource for short, contemplative prayer on a daily basis.]

<https://worldinprayer.org> [Provides weekly prayers for issues of concern around the world that we might tend to omit in our tendency toward self-oriented prayer!]