[PHOTO]

[PHOTO CAPTION] *A bronze plaque of a representation of Hope in Prayer, smelted in 1544 by the Italian artist Leone Leoni (1509-1590). Reproduced with the kind permission of the National Gallery’s Open Access programme 2025.*

[INTRO] Litanies are a form of prayer characterised by a series of invocations and responses, often used to petition God or the saints for intercession. They are a structured way to express praise, supplication, and petition, and can be found in various Christian traditions. Litanies frequently invoke the intercession of saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and angels, reflecting the belief that these figures can plead with God on behalf of those who pray.

[title] **Litanies In Catholic Liturgy**

[MAIN TEXT] Litanies are a form of prayer characterised by a series of invocations and responses, often used to petition God or the saints for intercession. They are a structured way to express praise, supplication, and petition, and can be found in various Christian traditions. Litanies frequently invoke the intercession of saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and angels, reflecting the belief that these figures can plead with God on behalf of those who pray.

The theology behind litanies highlights the importance of both individual and communal prayer, the power of intercession, and the role of repetition in deepening faith and spiritual connection. In communal settings, litanies foster a sense of unity and shared devotion among those participating in the prayer. Repetition in this regard is a means of focusing the mind on the prayer itself and releasing our thoughts from everyday concerns.

Litanies also include elements of praise and adoration, recognising the attributes and power of the divine. Litanies often draw on biblical themes and language, connecting the prayers to the broader narrative of salvation history.

Beyond public worship, litanies can also be a valuable tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth, allowing individuals to explore their relationship with God and the saints.

The theology of litanies centres on repetitive, structured prayer that uses rhythm and repetition to foster a deeper connection to God and the community of saints,

**Key theological concepts**

**Meditation and focus:** The repetitive, rhythmic nature of a litany helps calm the mind, manage distraction, and draw the person into a deeper state of prayer and contemplation. This meditative quality allows the words to become a source of focus and comfort.

**Communal participation:** Litanies are often performed as a dialogue between a leader and a congregation, highlighting the theology of the communion of saints. By invoking the saints and responding to their petitions, individuals insert themselves into a larger community of faith, both living and departed.

**Faith and trust:** The repeated phrases are a way to demonstrate and reinforce faith and trust in God. The familiar, well-worn words function as a friend and a guide, especially when a person feels unable to express their own prayers.

**Praise and supplication:** Many litanies, such as the Marian litanies, are structured with alternating praise and supplication. This creates a stream of prayer that is characterized by both persistent praise (*Virgo clemens*) and a plea for intercession (*Ora pro nobis*).

**Sanctification:** The litany is seen as a tool for sanctification, offering a structured way to bring one's life into alignment with God's will. The repeated themes, like those found in the *Litany of the Sacred Heart*, can help turn a home into a sanctuary and weave a family closer to Christ.

**Historical and biblical roots:** The practice has roots in ancient forms of prayer, such as the response in Psalm 136 ("for his mercy endures for ever") or the canticle of Daniel. The historical use of litanies in public worship and private devotion underscores their long-standing theological importance.

We offer a range of litanies, either to suit the Liturgical Calendar, or your special devotions. Some popular litanies are listed below.

**Popular litanies**

The Litany of the Sacred Heart

The Litany of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

The Litany of Loreto

The Litany of Our Lady of the Assumption

The Litany of the Holy Spirit