

The Prayer of General Intercession

We Pray for Others

The priest blesses the bread three times. He blesses the wine three times. He blesses them both together three times. Then a short prayer is offered asking that the gifts might be for all of the people worshipping. The choir sings the hymn to the Holy Spirit who is to come. He will complete the changing of our gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The priest offers this prayer about the Holy Communion:

Through this grant love, stability, and the desirable peace to the whole world, to the Holy Church and to all orthodox bishops, priests, deacons, to the kings of the world, to princes of people, to travelers, to seafarers, to prisoners, to them that are in danger, to the weary and to them that are at war with barbarians.

Through this grant also seasonableness to the weather and fertility to the fields and speedy recovery to them that are afflicted with diverse diseases.

Through this give rest to all who aforetime have fallen asleep in Christ, to the forefathers, to the patriarchs, to the prophets, apostles, martyrs, bishops, presbyters, deacons and the whole clergy of thine Holy Church and to all the laity, men and women, who have died in the faith.

This prayer, called the Prayer of General Intercession, was written over a thousand years ago. What the prayer asks God for is still desirable today. Love, stability, and peace are wanted by all peoples in all nations. Who doesn't want people to love one another? Who doesn't want good stable governments and stable families? Who doesn't want the world to be at peace with no country fighting another, with no person hurting another?

Love, stability, and peace are also requested for the Church and its leaders as well as the leaders of countries. Today there are few countries left with kings and princes, but we could substi-



tute “governmental leaders” in this part. Isn’t it right that we ask for our leaders to want the world to live in love and peace?

In the first section prayer asks for love, stability, and peace for travelers on land and sea. We would add air travelers today. It also asks for the same things for people who are prisoners. In the times of the early Church, many people were jailed because of their religious beliefs, but this prayer is for all prisoners whether their crimes were theft or murder! As Jesus said, we must love our enemies. This prayer shows that one of the ways we love them is to pray for them. And who is in danger? People who do dangerous work? People who live in big cities? People crossing a street? People living in polluted environments? All people are in danger at some time during each day so our church prays for them and us. Last in this section of the prayer, the priest prays for people who are at war.

When this prayer was first written, most people were farmers who depended on good weather and good soil to produce enough food for the family. Today many people are still farmers, but there are also lots of other kinds of work. We still depend on our farmers to grow the food we all need to eat, but the second paragraph could also be for all people who work at any kind of job. It is a prayer for good work that allows us to earn what we need. And it is a prayer for all people who are sick.

The last part of the prayer is for all people who have died as Christians. The Church has special terminology for

people who have died as Christians. It says they have “fallen asleep in Christ” or “died in faith.” This is to emphasize that those who have died believing in Jesus Christ and what he said about living again with God in his Kingdom have not truly died. They are like people who are asleep and wake up in another place which is Heaven. The people mentioned in the next part of the prayer are the leaders of the Christian Church throughout time as well as all the laity (which means people like you) who have no special job in the church.

The Prayer of General Intercession is not a prayer we hear. The priest says it while the choir is singing, so we do not hear it. The priest recites the prayer for all of us as he is our representative to God. After the choir finishes the hymn, the Litany of General Intercession is said. Here the deacon recites in a chant a long list of people who made a special contribution to the development of the Church. The choir leads us in the response, “Lord, have mercy (Der, voghormia),” as each part of the list is said.

Remember what the word intercession means. It means to do something on behalf of someone else. The Prayer of General Intercession is said by the priest on our behalf. You can make up your own prayer of intercession. Think about the three parts of the Prayer of General Intercession: The first part is for the world; the second part is for good living; the last part is for everyone who had died in the faith. Write your own prayer of general intercession. Write three paragraphs on the same three areas:

The world _____

Good living _____

Those who have died _____

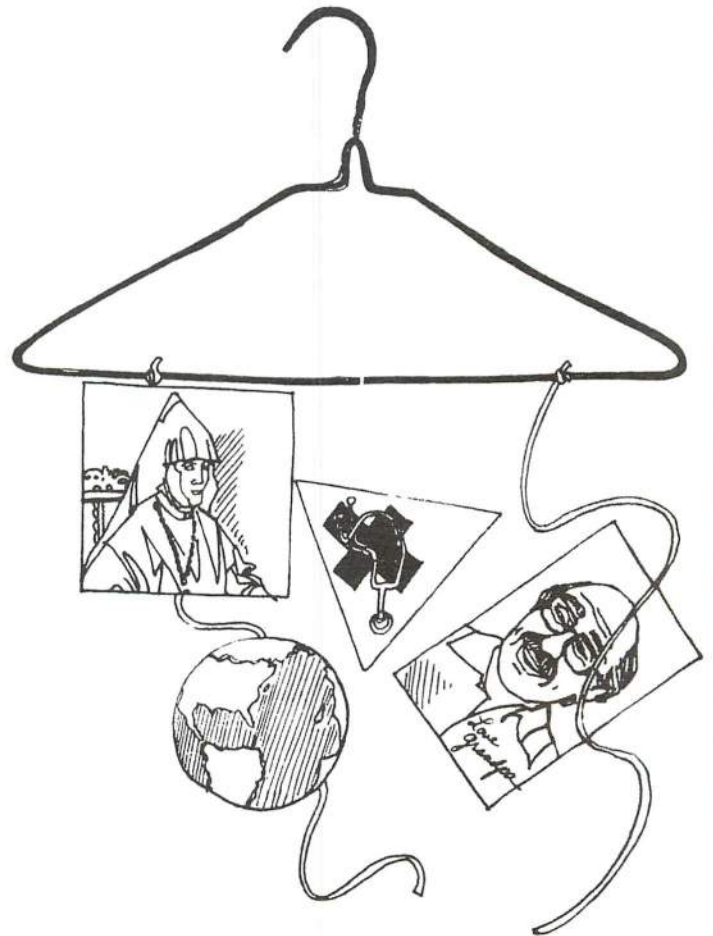
A PRAYER MOBILE

Make a mobile of the Prayer of General Intercession. Here is a suggestion on how to make it, but you can use your own ideas.

This mobile has four strings hanging from it. Each string has a different geometric shape attached to it. On the shapes are pictures of four areas the prayer talks about: The Church prays for its leaders; the Church prays for the earth; the Church prays for those who are sick; the Church prays for those who have died in faith.

Pictures for the shapes can be gathered from Armenian newspapers and other publications, Diocesan publications, your own church's publications and from general magazines. You might want to add photographs, too.

If you cannot finish the mobile today, that is okay. It may take you a few weeks to gather all the pictures you might want to include. Start the basic framework today and finish it up later at home.



PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Whom do you pray for? Who prays for you? What do you pray for when you pray for yourself? Would you want some of those same things for others?

Being part of the church means caring for and about others. Part of the way we care for others is by praying for them. Sometimes the priest might announce that a parishioner or a friend of a parishioner wants or needs our prayers. It does not matter that you may not know the person. You add your prayer to those of the rest of the church. Can our prayers help? Yes. God hears our prayers. He may not always answer our prayers the way we think they should be answered, but he does hear and answer them.

Why do we pray for those who have already died? Sometimes these prayers are like a thank you. When we pray for someone we ask God to accept the person into his kingdom. And we ask God to comfort the family and friends. In a way, too, we are

saying thank you to God for the person who has died. Thank you for letting that person be part of the Church and our lives.

We say prayers for our family, our friends, our relatives, and even our enemies. We ask God to help our enemies become our friends.

The Prayer of General Intercession is a sort of prayer list. It helps us remember to pray for all those we should pray for. We can do this for our personal prayers also. We can make a list of people we want to be sure to pray for. Just before we say our evening prayers, we can look at the list and say special prayers for the people on our list. Some people put pictures on their bedroom mirrors of people in their family they want to pray for.

Your prayer mobile will help you remember all the people and things the church prays for. Hang it in your room and look at it when you say your evening prayers.

Put elastic bands around shoe box at various amounts of tautness to produce various tones when plucked. To make this more guitar-like, use the top of the box with a hole cut out where the bands are to be plucked, and add a neck made out of a paper towel roll.



Box drum, can drum

- A large can such as the large Crisco container, or
- A Quaker Oats box, either large or small
- A stick, dowel or wooden spoon

Leave one end open, beat on the closed end!

Cymbals

- Pot lids, or
- Pie tins with handles made out of corks from wine bottles held in place by
- Thumbtacks

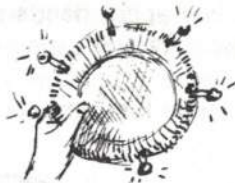
Clash two together, or use one and hit it with a wooden spoon or stick.



Tambourine

- Aluminum pie tin
- Hole punch
- Jingle bells
- Safety pins

See directions for kushotz. Shake!



Session 4—The Prayer of General Intercession

Key Concepts

1. The Church prays for its leaders.
2. The Church prays for the earth.
3. The Church prays for the sick.
4. The Church prays for those who are living and those who have died in Christ.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read and discuss the Prayer of General Intercession.
2. Write their own prayer of general intercession.
3. Make a mobile of the Prayer of General Intercession.
4. Finish work on the unit project.

Background for Teacher

The Prayer of General Intercession precedes one of the many litanies of the Divine Liturgy. It is an excellent example of communal type of prayer. Through the use of this prayer, the children should realize that as Christians we pray for others. This is one of the ways we share the Kingdom.

Materials Needed

- Wire coat hangers
- Pictures of the Catholicos and Diocesan Primate
- A polaroid camera to take pictures of the priest and deacon(s) and Sunday School teacher(s); or have pictures of these three (groups) from other sources, such as a parish booklet
- Magazines/newspapers
- Yarn
- Colorful construction paper on which to mount pictures
- A hole punch
- Scissors
- Marker

Procedure

1. As children enter, check homework and praise each child on homework, classwork, or attitude.

Begin class with a prayer. (5 min.)

2. Have students open their books to page 64 and read or review, "We Pray for Others" together. Ask students if they understand the terminology of the prayer. Explain any words that might be unknown. Ask them to explain words you think they might not understand. (10 min.)

3. Have students write the short paragraphs requested to make up their own prayer of general intercession. Have those who want to share them read their prayers to the class. (10 min.)

4. Do the mobile activity or at least start it in class. Do not let this activity take up the remainder of the session. Allow only 15 to 20 minutes and have the students take the mobiles home to complete if they are not finished in class. (15 min.)

5. If work on the Book of Prayers (unit project) is complete, display it in the class and have children read their favorite prayers. If it is not complete, plan time to finish it. You might want to announce that more prayers can be added throughout the year. (10 min.)

6. Read page 68 together to summarize the point of the lesson and extend it into the children's own lives. Follow the reading with an open-ended discussion initiated by questions such as: "What do you wish people would pray for you? Whom do you pray for most often?", etc. (10 min.)

7. *Homework:* Finish mobiles.

End class with a prayer, perhaps one from the book they have compiled!

Extending the Lesson

1. Have the children re-write the Prayer of General Intercession, working as a group. Put the prayer in context of today's world, work, and problems.

2. Have the children make a prayer chain like the paper chains they make for Christmas. Cut colorful paper in strips 1" by 3", and have them write on the strips the name of a person they want the class to

pray for. Be sure they write their own name on a strip. Link all the name strips together and pin to the bulletin board. Create a prayer to incorporate the chain, such as, "Lord, please help everyone whose name is on our prayer chain." You might want to add names to the chain as the year progresses.

3. Have a quiz on the first three units' work. Divide the children into two teams. Have each team think up ten questions. Have the teams ask each other their questions. See which team scores the most points. The winners get served by the losers during coffee hospitality after church.

Notes
