



# Litany of Saints

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In this guide you will find:

- Answers to common questions about the Litany of Saints
- Specific instruction on the use of the Litany of Saints at the Easter Vigil
- A template to help you add saints in the correct position
- A template including music for your cantor to which you can easily add invocations

## Introduction

The litany (from the Greek *lite* meaning “prayer or supplication”) has been part of the prayer life of the Church for many centuries. There are currently six litanies approved for public prayer in the Catholic Church: the Litany of the Saints, the Litany of Loreto (Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary), the Litany of St. Joseph, the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, the Litany of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When used liturgically, the litany typically involves a cantor, who provides the first half of the intercession, and the members of the congregation, who complete it.

The Litany of the Saints is used during the Easter Vigil, at ordinations and religious professions, during the consecration of a church or altar, or during public processions. There is a long form and a short form of the Litany of the Saints; when the Litany is used in rites that take place during Mass, the short form is used.

When singing the Litany of the Saints at the Easter Vigil, it is recommended that the patron saints of those to be baptised be included. Many people do not know that there is a ‘set’ form or structure to the Litany, and add the names in at random.

Here we will look at the way the Liturgy of the Saints is built up, so that the patron saints of those to be baptised will be added in the correct manner.

1. Introduction. We call on God’s mercy: “Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.”

2. We then call upon all the saints to intercede for us, in the following order: Mary, the angels and St Joseph; the Apostles, Evangelists and disciples; the martyrs, Bishops and Doctors of the Church; holy priests and monks, holy virgins and widows, all holy men and women.

3. The next part of the litany begins with another call for mercy and delivery from various evils, followed by a list of the ways in which this delivery to be realised (e.g. by Christ's incarnation, by his cross and suffering, by the coming of the Holy Spirit).

4. Finally, we pray for the Church and for particular needs – at the Easter Vigil it is for those who are being baptised; at an ordination or religious profession it is for the one being ordained or professed; at the Dedication of a Church it is for those who will worship in the church.

## Common Questions at Easter Vigil

### How Do I Know Whether to Sing the Litany?

- If there are baptisms, you sing the Litany and use the blessing at *Roman Missal* nos. 44/46 pp. 408 / 411
- If the font is to be blessed, but no one is to be baptized you sing the Litany and use the blessing at *Roman Missal* nos. 44/46 pp. 408 / 411
- If no one is to be baptized and the font is not to be blessed, the Litany is omitted and you use the Blessing of Water at *Roman Missal* no. 54 p. 414

### Which Litany Do I Sing?

The Litany of Saints should follow the Litany printed in *Roman Missal* no. 43 pp. 406 - 407

### May I Add Saints?

Yes. Names of some saints may be added, (*Roman Missal* no. 43 on pp. 406 - 407) especially:

- names of the Titular Saints of the church
- names of the Patron Saints in the place (St Mary of the Cross, Mackillop)
- patron saint names of those to be baptized

### Does the Position of the Saints Matter?

Yes! There are specific rules about where to add saints in the Litany. These will be explained below.

## What Is the Method of Singing?

The Litany is to be sung by two cantors (*Roman Missal* no. 43 on pp. 406-407). This means that the cantors alternate singing the invocations with the rest of the people responding, not that the two cantors sing together. If you do not have two cantors then you would, by necessity, use a single cantor. The nature of the Litany is call and response so you do not want everybody singing everything. The choir is to support the people in the response, not to replace the cantor.

## Can We Sing a Different Melody from the Roman Missal?

You may use a different melody if you:

- Retain the form of call and response between cantors and people/choir
- Make sure that the text matches the Roman Missal

## How to Add Saints to the Litany

### Order of Adding Saints

Saints are added to the Litany in the following order:

1. By rank
2. Men before women (customarily)
3. Date of death (heavenly birthday)

The template gives you the Saints from the Litany in the *Roman Missal* grouped in order by rank with the addition of our first Australian Saint, Mary Mackillop. To add a saint do the following:

1. For each saint you wish to add, determine their rank, whether the saint is male or female, and the saint's date of death
2. Find the rank on the template and type the saint's name into the proper position. It is helpful to include the date of death on this list. You may have to look up the date of death of other saints already in the list in order to determine where your saint fits.
3. Use a different colour of font so that you know these are optional names you added in case you want to remove them next year.
4. Lastly, add the names in the proper position on the cantor template

## Naming Conventions

- Sainly people of the Hebrew Bible: These are invoked as “Holy”, e.g. Holy Aaron, Holy Miriam, Holy Moses. They are placed in the litany in historical order
- The honorific “Holy” or “Saint” is used before every name even if you invoke several at once: Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity
- Groups of saints, like the Holy Angels of God, are invoked as “Holy” or “Saint (Name of the first saint) and companions”, e.g. Saint Paul Miki and Companions.
- If your parish church is named for Our Lady under a certain title, you ought to include the invocation. Our Lady is the only saint who may be invoked under several titles but using more than three is not recommended.
- If your parish is named for a mystery of the Lord’s life, this can be included chronologically under the section for “Invocations of the Power of the Paschal Mystery in Its Phases”

## Learn More

This article from 2006 by Dr. Paul Ford provides additional information about the structure and use of Litanies in the liturgy. Note that the sample litany in the article is not updated to the current edition of the *Roman Missal*.

- <https://npm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/When-the-Saints.pdf>

## Litany of Saints Easter Vigil Template

<b>Prayer to God</b>	
<b>Cry for Mercy to Christ the Lord</b>	
Lord, have mercy,	Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy,	Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy,	Lord, have mercy.
<b>Invocation of the Saints</b>	pray for us.
<b>Our Lady</b>	
Holy Mary, Mother of God,	
<b>Angels</b>	
Saint Michael, Holy Angels of God,	
<b>Patriarchs and Prophets</b>	
Saint John the Baptist, Saint Joseph, <i>(by tradition always the last patriarch invoked)</i>	
<b>Apostles and Disciples of the Lord</b>	
Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Saint Andrew, Saint John, Saint Mary Magdalene,	
<b>Martyrs</b>	
Saint Stephen, (34) Saint Ignatius of Antioch, (108) Saint Lawrence, (258) Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity, (165)	

Saint Agnes, (304)	
<b>Bishops and Doctors of the Church</b>	
Saint Gregory, Saint Augustine, Saint Athanasius, Saint Basil, Saint Martin, Saint Pope John the Twenty-third, Saint Pope John Paul the Second,	
<b>Priests and Religious</b>	
Saint Benedict, Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Saint Francis Xavier, (1552) Saint John Vianney, (1859) Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Jesus, (1582) Saint Mary Mackillop (1909)	
<b>Laity</b>	
All holy men and women, saints of God,	
<b>Invocations of Christ</b>	Lord, deliver us, we pray.
Lord, be merciful,	
<b>Prayers against Various Evils</b>	
From all evil, From every sin,	
<b>Invocations of the Power of the Paschal Mystery in Its Phases</b>	
From everlasting death, By your Incarnation,	

By your Death and Resurrection, By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,	
<b>Prayers for Various Needs</b>	Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.
<b>General Petitions</b>	
Be merciful to us sinners,	
<b>Specific Petitions</b>	
(If there are baptisms) Bring these chosen ones to new birth through the grace of Baptism, (If there are no baptisms) Make this font holy by your grace for the new birth of your children,	
<b>Conclusion</b>	
Jesus, Son of the living God,	Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer
Christ, hear us.	Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.	Christ, graciously hear us.

# Cantor Template

## Baptismal Liturgy

Priest: Dearly beloved . . .

Deacon: Let us stand.

V. Lord, have mer-cy.      R. Lord, have mer-cy.

V. Christ, have mer-cy.      R. Christ, have mer-cy.

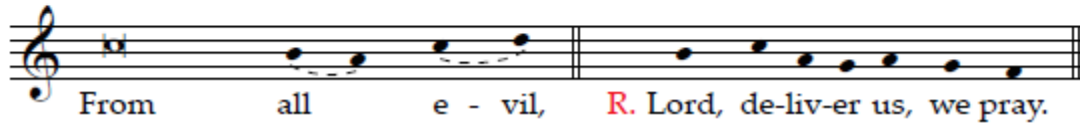
V. Lord, have mer-cy.      R. Lord, have mer-cy.

Holy    Mary, Mother of God,    [ ]      R. pray for us.

Saint Michael,  
 Holy Angels of God,  
 Saint John the Baptist,  
 Saint Joseph,  
 Saint Peter and Saint Paul,  
 Saint Andrew,  
 Saint John,  
 Saint Mary Magdalene,  
 Saint Stephen,  
 Saint Ignatius of Antioch,  
 Saint Lawrence,  
 Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity,  
 Saint Agnes,  
 Saint Gregory,  
 Saint Augustine,  
 Saint Athanasius,



Saint Basil,  
 Saint Martin,  
 Saint Benedict,  
 Saint Francis and Saint Dominic,  
 Saint Francis Xavier,  
 Saint John Vianney,  
 Saint Catherine of Siena,  
 Saint Teresa of Jesus,  
 Saint Mary Mackillop  
 All holy men and women, saints of God,



From every sin,  
 From everlasting death,  
 By your Incarnation,  
 By your Death and Resurrection,  
 By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,

Be merciful to us sin-ners, **R.** Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

If there are candidates to be baptized:

Bring these chosen ones to new birth through the grace of Bap-tism,

**R.** Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

If there is no one to be baptized:

Make this font holy by your grace for the new birth of your child-ren,

**R.** Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Jesus, Son of the liv-ing God, **R.** Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Christ, hear us. **R.** Christ, hear us.

Christ, gra-cious-ly hear us. **R.** Christ, gra-cious-ly hear us.

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