

“When the Saints Go Marching In”—The When, Why, How, and Who  
of Litanies of the Saints

by Paul F. Ford, Ph.D.

Ask new adult Catholics what was a highlight of the Easter Vigil of their initiation and they are likely to mention the Litany of the Saints. Ask any deacon or priest what he remembers about his ordination or religious women or men about their final vows-taking, and they often mention their prostration of the church floor and the waves of saints’ names and petitions which washed over them in the chanted litany.

Litanies are powerful forms of prayer; and the Litany of the Saints is one of the most beautiful liturgical prayers, reserved for special occasions indeed.

But how are litanies prepared? Not many people know. This article can help. This article is written to help you write a litany. It is based on the latest (1988) edition, with corrections, of the *Simple Gradual, which*, among other things, is a sourcebook you ought to have on your bookshelf.<sup>1</sup>

I have been singing litanies for forty years, both stationary (at ordinations and professions, for example) and in procession (at blessings of farm fields and on the first Sunday of Lent, for example). For the last thirty of these years I have prepared and chanted litanies at our seminary and at our cathedral and at the monastery of which my wife and I are oblates. I have designed litanies to be sung to the traditional chant melodies and to John D. Becker’s “Litany of the Saints.”<sup>2</sup> My greatest experience of litany was The Great Litany by Bernard Huijbers<sup>3</sup> sung by six massed choirs and assembly in our old cathedral at a concert to benefit men, women, and children suffering from HIV/AIDS — this was a foretaste of the glories of heaven!

As a parish liturgical leader, you have the opportunity of putting together, year after year, the required Litany of the Saints for the final rites of initiation during the Easter Vigil. For the baptism of infants, you also regularly rehearse the cantor(s) in the petitions and the saints invoked at the time of the intercessions. You are also encouraged to restore the ancient practice of singing Litany of the Saints for Solemn Occasions<sup>4</sup> for the entrance procession for the First Sunday of Lent.<sup>5</sup> St. Mark’s Day (April 25), the three days before the Ascension, and St. Isidore

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1 Paul F. Ford, *By Flowing Waters: Chant for the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 91–93, 404–410, 426–428. The original Latin is available as *Graduale Simplex in Usu Minorum Ecclesiarum* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), available from OCP and GIA.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Catholic Press, Edition 8877.

<sup>3</sup> *Sing the Mass* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), as arranged by Paul Gibson and conducted by Frank Brownstead, June 23, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> *By Flowing Waters: Chant for the Liturgy*, 404–410 and 426–428.

<sup>5</sup> See the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, dated January 16, 1988, of the Congregation for Divine Worship (USCC Publication 219-5), §22, the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, §261, and annual *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons*

and St. Maria's Day (May 15) are also days when litanies to implore God's protection against calamity and God's blessing on the crops are traditionally sung. Some liturgists suggest that the litany is especially effective on All Saints Day as the Entrance Song or the General Intercessions.

The Litany of the Saints for Solemn Occasions may also be used during the principal celebration of the six special periods of prayer mentioned in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, §331, and elaborated upon in the Appendix of the U.S. Bishops (the precise dates can be found in the particular calendar which applies to each community):

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Week/Day of Prayer for General Needs of Humankind<sup>6</sup>

Weekdays of Preparation for the Coming of the Holy Spirit<sup>7</sup>

Week/Day of Prayer for Human Rights and Equality<sup>8</sup>

Week/Day of Prayer for Harvest and Fruits of the Earth<sup>9</sup>

Week/Day of Prayer for World Justice and Peace.<sup>10</sup>

More rarely, if you are involved in planning for an ordination or a vow-taking or a dedication of a church (new or in use) or a fixed altar, you are also responsible for the litanies connected with those liturgies. And in the unlikely event you are asked to prepare for the blessing of an abbot or an abbess, again, preparing the proper litany belongs to you.

This task is not an easy one; but when you know how a litany is composed, you will find your task less difficult

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(Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications). The Litany takes the place of the Entrance Song and all the Introductory Rites up to the Opening Prayer. In the solemn form of the procession, the people assemble in a suitable place other than the church. The presider is dressed in alb, stole, and cope. After a suitable gathering song, the presider greets the people and he (or another priest or a deacon) gives a brief introduction. The presider then says an opening prayer (several alternatives are suggested in the *Ceremonial*) and then puts incense in the censer. The deacon announces, Let us go forth in peace, and the procession moves to the church. When it reaches the church, all go to their places; the presider reverences and incenses the altar; then the presider goes to the chair and exchanges the cope for a chasuble. At the end of the Litany, the presider sings or says the Opening Prayer of the Mass.

<sup>6</sup> Frequently assigned to the Fourth Week of Lent or to Ash Wednesday in the U.S.

<sup>7</sup> Observed on the weekdays after Ascension and before Pentecost (see the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, §26).

<sup>8</sup> Frequently assigned to the first full week of resumed Ordinary Time or to Independence Day in the U.S.

<sup>9</sup> Frequently assigned to the third week of the month of September or to Thanksgiving Day in the U.S..

<sup>10</sup> Frequently assigned to the first week of Advent or to New Year's Day in the U.S.

## The Common Structure and the Kinds of Litanies

All litanies of the saints are structured the same: <sup>11</sup>

### I. PRAYER TO GOD

Cry for Mercy to Christ the Lord or Supplications to the Trinity

### II. INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS

The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Angels

Prophets and Ancestors of Our Faith

Apostles, Evangelists, and First Followers of Christ

Martyrs

Bishops and Doctors

Priests and Religious

Laity

### III. INVOCATIONS OF CHRIST

Prayers against Various Evils

Invocations of the Power of the Paschal Mystery in Its Phases

### IV. PRAYERS FOR VARIOUS NEEDS

General Petitions

Specific Petitions

### V. CONCLUSION

There are basically three kinds of litanies: the shortest, the standard, and the solemn.

The standard litany (illustrated below) is sung for the final rites of initiation during the Easter Vigil, the baptism of infants,<sup>12</sup> the ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons, final vow-taking, the dedication of a church (new or in use) or a fixed altar, and the blessing of an abbot or an abbess. In my opinion, this litany ought to be added to confirmations with the *confirmandi* prostrate for its singing. (Janice and I wrote one for our wedding, invoking a whole list of married saints.)

The solemn litany is sung as the entrance procession for the First Sunday of Lent, St. Mark's Day, the three days before the Ascension, and St. Isidore and St. Maria's Day (May 15). It may also be sung on All Saints Day as the Entrance Song or the General Intercessions and during the principal celebration of the six special periods of prayer (mentioned above).

### The Shortest Litany: The Commendation of the Dying <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Except for the litany sung at the baptism of infants (in which the petitions come first and the saints come second) and for the litany as part of the commendation of the dying (in which only the saints are invoked).

<sup>12</sup> This one is unusual in that the petitions come *before* the invocations.

<sup>13</sup> The longer commendation litany has some lovely invocations and petitions:

The shortest litany is used in the commendation of the dying. In Part II of the “Pastoral Care of the Sick, called “Pastoral Care of the Dying,” the following rubric appears at §219 B: *A brief form of the litany may be prayed. Other saints may be added, including the patron saints of the dying person, of the family, and of the parish; saints to whom the dying person may have a special devotion may also be included.*

Holy Mary, Mother of God	pray for him/her
Holy angels of God	pray for him/her
Saint John the Baptist	pray for him/her
Saint Joseph	pray for him/her
Saint Peter and Saint Paul	pray for him/her

*Other saints may be included here.*

All holy men and women	pray for him/her
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## Customizing Litanies

Paragraph 221 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (and similar paragraphs in all the rites which use litanies) encourages you to add *at the proper place* the names of the other saints or petitions suitable for the occasion.

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Abraham, our father in faith,	pray for him/her
David, leader of God’s people,	pray for him/her
All holy patriarchs and prophets,	pray for him/her

From Satan’s power	Lord, save your people
At the moment of death	Lord, save your people
From everlasting death	Lord, save your people
On the day of judgment	Lord, save your people
By your coming as man	Lord, save your people
By your suffering and cross	Lord, save your people
By your death and rising to new life	Lord, save your people
By your return in glory to the Father	Lord, save your people
By your gift of the Holy Spirit	Lord, save your people
By your coming again in glory	Lord, save your people
Be merciful to us sinners	Lord, hear our prayer
Bring N. to eternal life, first promised to him/her in baptism	Lord, hear our prayer
Raise N. on the last day, for he/she has eaten the bread of life	Lord, hear our prayer
Let N. share in your glory, for he/she has shared in your suffering and death	Lord, hear our prayer

However, it is the experience of many that, wittingly or unwittingly, cantors delete many of the required saints, lump all the “extra” saints at the end of the list, and never take advantage of the encouragement to add pertinent petitions. This may happen because some worship aids and even some editions of the rites carelessly indicate that saints may be added only at the end of the list and/or because people are ignorant of the structure and the rules of litanies.

Using the structure given above, **saints are added** according to their rank in the order of their heavenly birthday (their date of death). **Petitions are added** according to their kind. You are permitted, even encouraged, to add to the names and petitions in the rites but you are not permitted to delete any names or petitions from any of the litanies of the rites. Some saints must be invoked in every litany and some petitions must be made, not because the saints would be offended if they were deleted or because the unprayed-against calamity might happen (in other words, not for superstitious reasons) but because the mention of these names and petitions inserts us into the great stream of people and universal concerns which the Church deems it essential to remember for our spiritual growth.

In the case of **any litany**, you would do well to consult with your (fellow) priest(s), deacon(s), fellow liturgists, musicians, and catechists as to who or what needs to be added to the standard litany, printed below.

Your parish litany should contain the names of the principal and secondary patrons of your diocese as listed in *The Order of Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours and Celebration of the Eucharist*, otherwise known as the *Ordo*. If religious order priests, sisters, or brothers staff your parish, it is appropriate to add at least their founder to this Litany.<sup>14</sup> You are not permitted to invoke blessed unless they are listed in our national or your diocesan or religious order calendar; these calendars have to be approved by Rome.

There are two things to notice about invoking saints. First, the uncanonized people of the Old Testament are invoked as “Holy” (e.g., “Holy Aaron, Miriam and Moses,” “Holy Jeremiah,” and the like). They are placed in the litany in historical order to the extent that this can be determined by consulting a reliable dictionary of the Bible. Second, the honorific (“Holy” or “Saint”) is used before every Old Testament name (e.g., “Saint Joachim and Saint Ann”).

If your parish church (or mission church) is named for a saint or for our Lady under a certain title (e.g., Our Lady of Talpa, Mother of Sorrows, etc.), you ought to include this invocation. Our Lady is the only saint who may be invoked under several titles in litanies of the saints; it is important, however, not to get carried away at this point. The *Simple Gradual* uses only three invocations of Mary; and the two extra follow the invocation, “Holy Mary, Mother of God.”

Litanies for the ordination of bishops add the names of all the apostles; the ordination of deacons adds to its litany the deacons Vincent and Ephrem and separates Francis of Assisi from Dominic

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<sup>14</sup> For further guidance as to what else might be appropriate in this circumstance, see the “Table of Liturgical Days According to Their Order of Precedence” at the end of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, 4d, 8d, and 11a. These norms are found at the beginning of every sacramentary and lectionary.

to underscore the fact that Francis was a deacon; and at religious professions and the blessing of abbots and abbesses, the litanies contain a special list of religious saints.

If your parish church is named for a mystery of our Lord's life (e.g., the Transfiguration, the preaching of the Beatitudes, etc.), these can be included at the proper place in the litany. Mysteries of our Lord's life are added chronologically under the "Invocations of the Power of the Paschal Mystery in Its Phases" (listed below in the sample litany).

Since you may also add "petitions suitable to the occasion," you would do well to poll your (fellow) priest(s), deacon(s), fellow liturgists, musicians, and catechists for their suggestions for these petitions. These petitions can be of three kinds: prayers against various evils, general petitions, and specific petitions.<sup>15</sup> Like all preparation of general intercessions, these petitions are brought to mind by the Liturgy of the Word for that particular celebration and by the needs of the universal and local church and of the world. Similarly, the Liturgy of the Word may suggest a phase of the Paschal Mystery whose power might be invoked in the litany.

In the case of the litany for the **First Sunday of Lent**, since the Rite of Election takes place on the First Sunday of Lent, it would be appropriate to pray for the newly elect in your parish and around the world.<sup>16</sup> In most of the rites that have litanies, the Litany takes the place of the General Intercessions.<sup>17</sup> However, the Entrance Litany does not usually take the place of the General Intercessions in the cathedral Mass at which the Rite of Election is celebrated<sup>18</sup> and it *never* takes their place at the Easter Vigil or at eucharistic liturgies of initiation outside the Easter Vigil.<sup>19</sup>

Before you compose the text of the litany for the Easter Vigil, ask the members of the catechumenal team the name of the patron saint of each person who will receive the sacraments of initiation that night.

Once you have gathered all the extra names and petitions, arrange the saints in the proper ranks. It is very helpful also to arrange them according to the dates (at least the year) of their birthdays into heaven, that is, their death days. The ranks for the saints in the general calendar of the church are found by consulting the latest edition of the calendar in any sacramentary or lectionary.<sup>20</sup> When one saint is in two ranks (such as Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor), she

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<sup>15</sup> Examples of traditional petitions in these categories are found in the Litany of the Saints in *The Handbook of Indulgences* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 2001). This too should be on your bookshelf.

<sup>16</sup> Petitions may be added from the beautiful texts at Number 134 in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (but see note 9).

<sup>17</sup> Ordination of a Bishop, 12; Ordination of (a) Priest(s), 8; Ordination of (a) Deacon(s), 8; Abbot, 15; Abbess, 10; and Religious Profession, 50; Dedication of a New Church, 13; Dedication of a Church in Use, 16; and Altar, 57.

<sup>18</sup> RCIA 134 and 137.

<sup>19</sup> RCIA 236, 241, 327, and 592.

<sup>20</sup> See also *Norms Governing Liturgical Calendars* (USCC Publication No. 928), pp. 91–157.

is usually ranked by the first designator (e.g., virgin; thus she is among the religious); but she may also be ranked with the doctors. If you don't own a copy of the new Martyrology, which lists thousands of authentic saints by day, country, date of death,<sup>21</sup> you may have to consult the latest edition of *Butler's Lives of the Saints* <sup>22</sup> (which your parish library ought to have) for rank and date of death. Authentic saints whose date of death is unknown can be properly ranked and listed by the century in which they died.

I recommend that you provide in the worship aid one-line, parenthetical identifiers for any saint you think people do not know. These identifiers can be: date of death, primary place of ministry, what or who the saint might be patron of or against, and other pastorally useful information. Don't belabor the obvious, however; and whatever you do, make sure the cantor doesn't sing it! (Don't laugh! This has actually happened).

The following is a sample standard litany for the Easter Vigil pointed for the standard chant settings (see below, for the John Becker setting). Every name and petition in plain type is required. Anything in parentheses is optional. Everything in italic is optional. The acute accent indicates an ascending pitch, and the grave accent a descending pitch.

**Do not sing anything in parentheses** but print this material in your worship aid. Printing the entire litany in your worship aid educates people in their understanding of the saints and in enlarging their prayer concerns.

You will notice that I have put into parentheses all cognomens ("identifiers" such as "of Antioch" or "the evangelist"; traditionally only St. John the Baptist and St. Mary Magdalene retain their cognomens; all others are not sung; hence the need to print the litany in your worship aid). By tradition Saint John Mary Vianney is invoked with his first and middle names.

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<sup>21</sup> *Martyrologium Romanum* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> In twelve volumes (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995–2000). The 1985 Michael Walsh edition for HarperCollins is still in print; it goes by the title *Butler's Lives of the Saints, Concise Edition*; this has been updated since the council. John Delaney's excellent *Dictionary of Saints* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), *A New Dictionary of Saints* (Donald Attwater, compiler; revised by John Cumming; The Liturgical Press, 2002), and the lists in the annual *Catholic Almanac* (Our Sunday Visitor Press) are also reliable. For websites, see

<http://users.erols.com/saintpat/ss/ss-index.htm> and  
<http://www.daughtersofstpaul.com/saintday/index.html> and  
<http://www.catholic.org/saints/stindex.php>

For those canonized by Pope John Paul II, see

[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/saints/ELENCO\\_SANTI\\_GPII\\_ok.htm](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ELENCO_SANTI_GPII_ok.htm)

## I. PRAYER TO GOD

### **Cry for Mercy to Christ the Lord or Supplications to the Trinity<sup>23</sup>**

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

## II. INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS

### **The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Angels**

Holy Mary, Mother of God,<sup>24</sup> pray for us.  
*Our Lady of Guadalupe (patroness of the Americas),* pray for us.  
*Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (patroness of the U.S.),* pray for us.  
Saint Michàel, pray for us.  
Holy angels of Gód, pray for us.

### **Prophets and Ancestors of Our Faith**

*Holy Abraham and Holy Sarah,* pray for us.  
*Holy Miriam, Aaron, and Moses,* pray for us.  
*Saint Zachary and Saint Elizabeth,* pray for us.  
*Saint Joachim and Saint Ann,* pray for us.  
Saint John the Bápist, pray for us.  
Saint Jósèph, <sup>25</sup> pray for us.

### **Apostles, Evangelists, and First Followers of Christ**

Saint Peter and Saint Pául, pray for us.  
Saint Ándrèw, pray for us.  
Saint Jóhn, pray for us.  
*Saint Mary, Saint Martha and Saint Lázàrus (patrons of hospitality),* pray for us.  
Saint Mary Mágðàlene,<sup>26</sup> pray for us.

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<sup>23</sup> Solemn Litanies may also begin with the following four invocations, to which the response is, "Have mercy on us": "God the Father of Heaven," "God, the Son, the World's Redeemer," "God the Holy Spirit," and "Holy Trinity, One God."

<sup>24</sup> By tradition, Our Lady may be invoked under several titles but I try to limit these to three or else the litany begins to feel like a litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

<sup>25</sup> By tradition St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is always the last patriarch invoked.

<sup>26</sup> St. Mary of Bethany (previous invocation) and St. Mary Magdalene are two different saints.

## Martyrs

Saint Stéphan (†c. 34, first deacon),	pray for us.
Saint Ignátius (of Antioch †c. 107, Apostolic Father),	pray for us.
Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity (†203, North African matron and servant),	pray for us.
Saint Lávrence (†258, Roman archdeacon and almoner),	pray for us.
<i>Saint Christopher († Third century; patron of travelers),<sup>27</sup></i>	<i>pray for us.</i>
Saint Ágnès (†c.304, Roman virgin, patroness of young girls),	pray for us.
<i>Holy English Martyrs<sup>28</sup></i>	<i>pray for us.</i>
<i>Saint Andrew (Kim) and Companions (Nineteenth century Korean martyrs),</i>	<i>pray for us.</i>

## Bishops and Doctors

Saint Athanásius (†373, archbishop of Alexandria and doctor of the church),	pray for us.
Saint Básił (†379, archbishop of Caesarea and doctor of the church),	pray for us.
Saint Mártin (of Tours †397, bishop),	pray for us.
Saint Augústine (†430, bishop and doctor of the church),	pray for us.
Saint Grégòry (the Great †604, pope and doctor of the church),	pray for us.

## Priests and Religious

Saint Bénédict (†c.547, founder of western monasticism),	pray for us.
Saint Dominic (†1221) and Saint Fráncis (of Assisi †1226),	pray for us.
Saint Fráncis (Xavier †1552, patron of the foreign missions),	pray for us.
Saint Cáthèrine (of Siena †1380, virgin and doctor of the church),	pray for us.
Saint Terésà (of Avila †1582, virgin and doctor of the church),	pray for us.
Saint John Máry` (Vianney †1859),	pray for us.

## Laity

<i>Saint Helena (†c. 330, finder of the True Cross),</i>	<i>pray for us.,</i>
<i>Saint Monica (†387, mother of St. Augustine, patroness of married women),</i>	<i>pray for us.,</i>
<i>Saint Isidore and Saint Marià (†1130, farmers, patrons of farmers)</i>	<i>pray for us.,</i>
<i>Saint Júan (Diego †1548),</i>	<i>pray for us.</i>
All holy men and wómèn,	pray for us.

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<sup>27</sup> He may still be invoked even though his feast was removed from the universal calendar in 1969.

<sup>28</sup> Large groups of saints are invoked as “Holy” or by “N. (name of first saint) and Companions”; surnames and other cognomens may be printed but not sung.

### III. INVOCATIONS OF CHRIST

Lord, be merciful

Lord, save your people.

#### Prayers against Various Evils

From all evil

Lord, save your people.

From every sin

Lord, save your people.

*From sudden and unprovided death,*

*Lord, save your people.*

*From anger, and hatred, and all ill will, ,*

*Lord, save your people.*

*From impurity and jealousy, ,*

*Lord, save your people.*

*From the scourge of earthquake, ,*

*Lord, save your people.*

*From plague, famine, drought, and war, ,*

*Lord, save your people.*

From everlasting death

Lord, save your people.

#### Invocations of the Power of the Paschal Mystery in Its Phases

By your coming as man,

Lord, save your people.

*(or: By your becoming human, or: By your incarnation)*

*By your baptism and your fasting,*

*Lord, save your people.*

By your death and rising to new life,

Lord, save your people.

By your gift of the Holy Spirit,

Lord, save your people.

### IV. PRAYERS FOR VARIOUS NEEDS

#### General Petitions

Be merciful to us sinners,

Lord, hear our prayer.

Guide and protect your holy Church,<sup>29</sup>

Lord, hear our prayer.

Keep Pope John Paul (II) and all the clergy

in faithful service to your Church,<sup>30</sup>

Lord, hear our prayer.

Bring all peoples together in trust and peace,<sup>31</sup>

Lord, hear our prayer.

Strengthen us in your service,<sup>32</sup>

Lord, hear our prayer.

#### Specific Petitions

*If there are candidates to be baptized (pause briefly at the superscript commas ’)<sup>33</sup>:*

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<sup>29</sup> Optional at celebrations of the sacraments of initiation only.

<sup>30</sup> Optional at celebrations of the sacraments of initiation only.

<sup>31</sup> Optional at celebrations of the sacraments of initiation only.

<sup>32</sup> Optional at celebrations of the sacraments of initiation only. In the other litanies, other general petitions are added here and other specific petitions are added in the following category.

Give new life to these chosen ones  
by the gràce of baptism, Lord, hear our prayer.

(Give new life to these chosen ones  
by the grace of baptism ' and pour out your Holy` Spirit,  
Lord, hear our prayer.)

(Give new life to these chosen ones  
by the grace of baptism, ' pour out your Spirit, '  
and feed them with your Body` and Blood,  
Lord, hear our prayer.)

*If there is no one to be baptized:*  
By your grace bless this font  
where your children will be reborn,  
Lord, hear our prayer.

## V. CONCLUSION

Jesus, Son of thè Living God,  
Christ, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.  
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer. Christ, hear us.  
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

A final note: If you are not using the litany in a procession, the correct posture during the Easter Season is standing; at all other times, kneeling.

## Musical Settings

As far as musical settings are concerned, there are many.

The most recent *People Mass Book* from World Library Publications (2003) uses the same setting (#617) as *Worship III* (#827) and other GIA publications; and these are the same as those published by OCP except for the closing invocations (OCP skillfully simplifies the four last types of responses of the people: "Lord, save your people," "Lord, hear our prayer," "Christ, hear

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<sup>33</sup> This pausing is also done at ordinations, final professions, and the blessing of an abbot/abbess. For example:

*Last petitions, before the conclusion, at the ordination of one man:*  
Bless this chosen man. Lord, hear our prayer.  
Bless this chosen man (pause) and make him holy, Lord, hear our prayer.  
Bless this chosen man, (pause) make him holy, (pause) and consecrate him for his sacred duties,  
Lord, hear our prayer.

*Last petition, before the conclusion, at the religious profession of one brother/sister:*  
Bless this brother/sister of ours, your servant, (pause) make him/her holy, (pause) and consecrate him/her to your service, Lord, hear our prayer.

us,” and “Lord Jesus, hear our prayer”). These require little or no rehearsal with the assembly but can tend to be monotonous (but, then, some would say that is the nature of a litany).

In *By Flowing Waters* I offer two settings, the standard litany for the Easter Vigil (with my two added special petitions) and the Litany of the Saints for Solemn Occasions. The latter setting is much closer to the Latin chant because I want to encourage the retention of most of the Latin and Greek responses: “Kyrie, eleison,” “Christe, eleison,” “miserere nobis,” “libera nos, Domine,” “Te rogamus, audi nos,” “Christe, audi nos,” and “Christe, exaudi nos.”

As you decide among the settings available, keep in mind that you are going to be using this for many years to come: It must wear well. And when you train your cantors (it is traditional to use two or four), remind them that invocations and petitions which end on a monosyllabic word sing that final syllable at the single higher pitch indicated in most settings (e.g., “Göd,” not “Gö-öd”). (However, *Worship III* recommends that, in petitions that end on a monosyllabic word, sing that syllable with the final two ascending pitches.) I don’t recommend accompaniment of any of the chant versions.

The John Becker litany has found a solid place in the repertoire and can be adapted for most of the uses already discussed. The published edition is not always faithful to ordering the saints by their death dates and Origen has not yet been canonized. The incorporation of the petitions for the about-to-be-initiated might be better worked out as follows (the asterisk indicates a required petition, the acute accent indicates an ascending pitch, and the grave accent a descending pitch).

Give new life to these chosen ones*	hear our prayer.
By the grace of báp̄tism,*	hear our prayer.
Give new life to these chósèn ones	hear our prayer.
By the sending of your Spírìt,	hear our prayer.

Give new life to these chosen ones	hear our prayer.
feed them with your Body` ,	hear our prayer.
Give new life to these chosen ones	hear our prayer.
feed them with your Blood,	hear our prayer.
Last System: Christ, hear us, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.	

If you wish to use the Becker at ordinations, consider the following versions of verses five and six and the addition of a seventh verse (the asterisked petitions are required):

#### **Verse Five**

Lord, be merciful,*	save your people.
From all evil and addiction*	save your people.
From évèry sin*	save your people.
From the scourge of éarthquàke,	save your people.
From everlasting death*	save your people.
By your incarnátion*	save your people.
By your death and resurréction*	save your people.

By your outpouring of the Spirit\* save your people.  
Last System: Christ, hear us, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

**Verse Six**

Bless the troubled and afflicted, hear our prayer.  
Unify all Christians,\* hear our prayer.  
Bless all spouses and all children, hear our prayer.  
Give peace and justice to all peoples,\* hear our prayer.

Lead all peoples to the Gospel,\* hear our prayer.  
Have mercy on all prisoners, hear our prayer.  
Save all who have helped us, hear our prayer.  
Make us strong in your service,\* hear our prayer.  
Last System: Christ, hear us, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

**Verse Seven**

Have mercy on us sinners,\* hear our prayer.  
Guide your holy Church,\* hear our prayer.  
Protect your holy people,\* hear our prayer.  
Bless the pope and all the clergy\* hear our prayer.

Bless these chosen men,\* hear our prayer.  
Bless them, make them holy,\* hear our prayer.  
Bless them, consecrate them\* hear our prayer.  
for their sacred duties,\* hear our prayer.  
Last System: Christ, hear us, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

For diaconate ordinations, the following one and half verses work (the asterisked and the section marked are required):

**Verse Two**

Peter,\* Paul\* and Andrew,\* pray for us.  
James\* and John\* and Mary Magdalene\* pray for us.  
Deacon Philip and his daughters pray for us  
Deacon Stephen,\*§ Deacon Lawrence,\*§ pray for us

Ignatius,\* Deacon Vincent§ pray for us.  
Perpetua,\* Felicity,\* pray for us.  
Athanasius\* and Basil,\* pray for us.  
Augustine,\* Deacon Ephrem§ pray for us.  
Last System: All you holy men and women, pray for us.

**Verse Three**

Patrick,\* Gregory,\* and Benedict,\* pray for us.  
Dominic\* and Deacon Francis,\*§ pray for us.  
Catherine,\* Teresa,\* pray for us.

Ignatius, Francis Xávier,\*  
etc.

pray for us.

If you wish to use the Becker at the dedication of a church, consider the following version of the second half of verse six:

Bless our new church building,*	hear our prayer.
Bless it, make it hóly`,*`	hear our prayer.
Make it holy, consecráte it,*	hear our prayer.
Consecrate it to your wòrship,*	hear our prayer.
<i>Last System:</i> Christ, hear us, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.	

Properly prepared, litanies can be some of the most powerful sung prayer forms. The work you put into them now will have a harvest in eternity.