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GREENING CHRISTIAN WORSHIP ~ PART 3 AN ORDER FOR DAILY PRAYER AT HOME

In the home of my childhood — my Dad a Lutheran minister, my Mom a Lutheran minister's daughter — we prayed a brief form of family worship every evening around the dining room table after the meal was over and before the table was cleared. We could as easily have used one of the forms in our Church's worship books, like Evening Prayer (Vespers), or Responsive Prayer (Suffrages). But we used instead a form familiar to both my parents from their own childhood households, unvarying from Season to Season of the Church Year, which I can remember praying with them when we visited either set of my Grandparents. Perhaps it was a version of Luther's Table Blessing, which contemporary worshippers may find in the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* on page 1167.



One of the virtues of the form for Table Blessing we used in my childhood was its brevity. Another was its comprehensiveness, since it included reading from the Bible as well as a simple prayer-form. I present this month my own version of that Daily Prayer at Home, presented here in a slightly expanded adaptation, with our wounded world in my mind as we ponder ways to keep its greening on our personal and corporate radar screens.

Oh yes: When we had guests or visitors at our table, which was often, we'd simply invite them to join us in our prayers. I like to think it was a winsome witness as well as an un-embarrassed gesture of hospitality. You could make it clear to non-Christian guests that this brief worship is simply part of your household's piety, and they would be welcome merely to listen, while the rest of us prayed. Those Table Prayers, led by my father, did a lot to shape me and my own personal piety to this day.

You say you can't find time in your busy schedules for the whole household to gather together for a meal? Welcome to the 21st Century! The world of take-out meals — drive-through meals! — from fast-food joints, and busy schedules even for kids in Junior High. I know; It's very difficult for most families to gather once a day around a table. But these days you can't find time, as they say, you have to take time. Daily Prayer at home needn't be in the evening. It could be after breakfast. It could be before bedtime. Whenever, remember: Christian discipleship is resolutely counter-cultural. That may mean simply living life according to a different rhythm than that of the rest of the world around you. Your kids may complain at first. But what else is new? Kids will complain about a lot of stuff.

And of course it's easier to institute a practice like Daily Prayer at Home while kids are still very young and impressionable. By the time kids become sullen teenagers it's almost too late. Almost. But try anyway.

In your own Daily Prayer in your home, you might want to consider using *Evangelical Lutheran Worship's* Matins, page 295, Vespers, page 309, or Suffrages, page 328, depending on the time of day. Note however that the first two are considerably longer than the Rite I suggest here, and the last, although adaptable to the time of day, would not normally include scripture reading. Suffrages is simply and quite appropriately a prayer office. But hey, we have evangelical freedom to use these forms according to our own needs and purposes, eh?

The weekly prayer cycle I suggest below is my own elaboration. It is based on the classic theological scheme from antiquity known as the "Orders of Creation". These "Orders of Creation" represent the arenas of life where we each find ourselves simply by reason of being human. See [Essay 96](#) above. Dietrich Bonhoeffer preferred to think of them as "Mandates", in the sense that, within each, God calls us to serve, and provides a set of "mandates" for living out our baptism. To serve the neighbour, and to exercise lordship within the creation: That's our "mandate" in baptism.

This simple form for Daily Prayer at Home may be adapted to your uses. Choose a time when most members of the household are together.

- 1) All may (make the sign of the cross and) say the INVOCATION: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- 2) A brief selection of SCRIPTURE is read. See *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pages 1121 -1153 for a guide.

Or utilize devotional aids such as *Eternity for Today* or *The Word in Season* with the commentaries they provide. Conversation about the reading and the commentary may follow.

- 3) Leader: Lord, have mercy. R: LORD, HAVE MERCY.

Leader: Christ, have mercy.
Leader: Lord, have mercy.

R: CHRIST, HAVE MERCY.
R: LORD, HAVE MERCY.

- 4) ALL: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.

5) The LEADER may then offer a brief prayer. See *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pages 72 - 87. Or use the weekly cycle suggested below.

MONDAY: Today, pray for all families; for fathers and mothers; for children; for the presence of God's Spirit among the generations; for extended families; for singles; for widows and widowers; for the divorced; for marriages; for intentional family groupings, such as communal households...

TUESDAY: Pray today for our civic life; for our country and all governments; for the Queen and Prime Minister / President; for the Parliament / Congress; for provincial and state governments; for managers and mayors and elected officials in towns and villages; for those in media who shape public opinion; for voters; for police and firefighters ; for those in the military; for peace and justice at home and abroad...

WEDNESDAY: Pray today for commerce and industry; for capital and labour; for all the institutions of our economic life; for systems of production and distribution; for the hungry, the homeless, the dispossessed, the powerless, the unemployed; for a more equitable distribution of the world's wealth and resources; for endangered species; for the environment...

THURSDAY: Pray today for science, education, technology, and medicine; for all who teach and learn; for the healing arts; for doctors, nurses, technicians, counselors, therapists; for teachers and students; for the ill and addicted; for the bereaved and for those facing death; for all useful knowledge...

FRIDAY: Pray today for the arts; for musicians, artists, architects, engineers, poets, playwrights, novelists, film makers, dancers; for the vision and creativity that the arts bring to human life; for the holy yearning the arts teach us...

SATURDAY: Pray today for our leisure time; for all that refreshes and recreates us; for

retreat centres and camps; for sports and games and fun; for all that makes us laugh; for the entertainment industry; for the freedom given by the Spirit not to have to earn our salvation; for the relaxation and joy of the Sabbath...

SUNDAY: The Lord's Day: Pray for the Church; for your home parish and its pastor and people; for all churches in your community; for all Christian churches and denominations around the world and for our more visible unity; for all the world's religions as paths to truth; for the Final Coming of God's Dominion in Christ...

6) Leader: Let us bless the Lord. R: THANKS BE TO GOD.

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The above scheme may be made easier to remember if you can invent distinctive mnemonic devices for each day. For example: In USA, national and civic elections are often held on a Tuesday, making it easy to remember to pray on that day for civic life; Saturday is often a "day off" for many, and could be associated with prayers for leisure. Best advice might be to print off these pages and fold them into your family Bible or *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*...

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Worship Workbench offers practical teaching about Christian worship and the preparation of liturgy from retired ELCIC pastor and liturgy professor, Paul F. Bosch, CWA. The entire series of Worship Workbench essays is available on the ELCIC + Worship Workbench page at **Lift Up Your Hearts** www.worship.ca.

See also Fred Ludolph's essay "Grain of Life and Grape of Love: Worship Which Inspires Thanksgiving and Attention to Stewardship" in **The Road Where Faith Is Found**, a series of pastoral essays designed to support the reception and exploration of Evangelical Lutheran Worship in the context of a church In Mission for Others. The entire series of Road Where Faith Is Found essays is available on the ELCIC + Worship Matters page at **Lift Up Your Hearts**.

