

Author: Paul F. Bosch [pbosch@golden.net]
Series: **Worship Workbench**
Issue: **Essay 145 + December, 2009**



Copyright: © 2009 Paul F. Bosch.

*This document may be freely reproduced for non-commercial purposes with credit to the author and mention of the **Lift Up Your Hearts** web site < www.worship.ca > as the source.*

A CUSTOMARY FOR WORSHIP THE GREAT LITANY

1.0 The Great Litany in *ELWorship* is an updated form of one of the most ancient prayers in the treasury of the Christian church; Luther regarded it as second only to the Lord's Prayer in importance in the church's life. There are not many occasions, in public worship or private, when we are reminded to pray, for example, for "women in childbirth" or for "orphans, widowers and widows" -- or, for that matter, for our own reconciliation with "our... persecutors and slanderers". The generosity and scope of The Great Litany make it the "Parent of all Prayer".

1.2 The Great Litany is composed of an opening and closing Kyrie, and four grand movements, noted below. And it has been utilized, in the long tradition of the church, as a processional prayer, allowing worshipers the opportunity to commit the body as well as the voice and heart to the grand petitions offered here. A procession in worship invites the worshiper to "walk the way of the cross" in faith with Jesus our Lord, and in a simple ritual gesture to retrace the journey from un-faith to faith, from the "kingdoms of this world" toward and into the "New Jerusalem".

1.3 Processions in worship also have the character of "protest march" or "political demonstration": we are announcing in our very bodies that our ultimate commitment, our ultimate value, is not identical with tribe or race or clan or nation, but to a "heavenly citizenship".

1.4 So our prayer-procession this morning will invite you to join in that witness of enacted prayer. The opening Kyrie will be led from the Leaders' prayer desk, the congregation kneeling in the pews. Then the procession will follow this route:

2.1 The Deprecations ("to avert by prayer") will be led at the entrance door of the Chapel; in temperate weather, these could be prayed outside the door: "From all sin, from all error...good Lord, deliver us..."

2.2 The Obsecrations ("to ask on religious grounds") will be led at the font in the baptistery: "By the mystery of...your holy birth; by your baptism...Help us, good Lord..."

2.3 The Supplications (prayers for ourselves; note there are only two) will be led at the Corpus in the Narthex: "In all time of our tribulation...Save us, good Lord..."

2.4 The Intercessions (prayer in behalf of others; note this is the longest part of the prayer) and the final Kyrie will be led at the Table, leaders and people kneeling at the altar rail: "To rule and govern your...Church...Hear us, good Lord..."

More to come...

