

**THE CHURCH THAT IS IN YOUR HOUSE**



**3 PRAYERS**

**His Grace Bishop Paula**



## **3 PRAYERS**

**Prayers in the family church**

**The most important role of the church is prayer, through which it plants in our hearts the love of being in continuous touch with God. Thus our houses will be “houses of prayers”, and hence God will dwell among us.**

**St. Basil says about prayer**

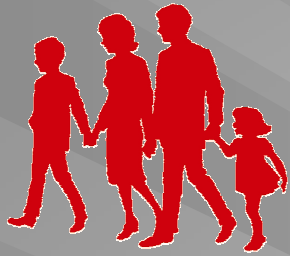
**“ Prayer is to cling to God at all moments of our life, so life becomes one continuous prayer without any disruptions.”**



**Prayers are very important and no one can neglect them in their lives.**

**St John Chrysostom says**

**“He who does not pray to God is dead in spirit; he has no life in him.” He also says: “Prayers are a great weapon, an endless wealth, it is a richness which would never let you down, a quiet harbour, it is calmness without weary.”**



***We need to guard ourselves with prayers so that we may be able to combat the devil. We can take from God's unlimited power***

***which can support our limited abilities. Through His power we can do everything. We will never find rest amidst this troublesome world surrounding us, except by putting ourselves in God's kind hands and being in His embrace. We resort to Him in our prayers, putting all our problems before Him, taking peace and comfort from Him, and hence we also notice here the importance of prayers in our houses.***





# **The importance of family prayers**



**where all members pray together  
( this is in addition to individual  
prayers ), are highlighted below :**

# 1



***God dwells amidst us in the family prayers***

***Our Master Jesus  
Christ promised us:  
“For where two or  
three are gathered  
together in My  
name, I am there in  
the midst of them”  
(Matthew 18:20)***



# 2

## Family prayers encourage

those members who are  
lazy or reluctant to  
pray individually, to  
participate.





# 3

## In the family prayers

all the members benefit from each prayer which the member's pray with fervency and warmth. Their spiritual enthusiasm would rekindle the hearts of the others present, and so the prayers might be accepted by God, because of their fervency.

4

*The family prayers unite us*

**in a holy meeting;** it unites us with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5

**It provides organisation**

and time we give to our relationship with God. The family prayers occur at a fixed time and place within the house

# 6



**Family prayers are considered a school**

where children learn  
to pray, how to pray,  
how to respect God,  
and how to stand in  
reverence.



**Now, the question is always asked:  
what are we supposed to pray  
in the family prayer:**

## **( 1 ) The Agbia Prayers**

**These prayers are very  
important because:**

A

**The Holy Bible urges us to use the Psalms in our prayers:**

**As St. Paul says : “ How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (1 Corinthians 14:26). Also, “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).**



B

## The words of the Psalms are according to God's will :

St James says: “ **You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures**” (James 4:3). Also, God addressed the children of Israel: “**When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood**” (Isaiah 1:15). But as for the words of the Psalms, they are inspired by God, they are prayers according to His will. We pray with the words of the Psalms which were recorded by David the Prophet, whose heart was according to God's heart.

C

**The prayers of the Agbia allows us to spend more time with God:**

Many of us do not have the words or thoughts which may encourage us to spend time before God in prayer, talking to Him, but David the Prophet, because of his life-long experience with God, was rich and deep in his spiritual thoughts and words, and so we use his words to enrich our prayers.

D

## The Agbia prayers are all encompassing:

**In it we find thanksgiving**, pleadings, and praise. We start with the Thanksgiving prayer, which is very rich in its meanings. In this prayer we thank God for everything, even those things which we forget to thank God for.

**The Agbia teaches us to ask for the needs of others before ourselves**; it also teaches us that we should ask for our salvation before asking for anything first. For this reason, we begin with praying Psalm 50, after the Thanksgiving Prayer, in order to ask God, in His great mercy, to have compassion upon us and forgive us our many sins.

**At the end of each hour, we conclude by praying :** “ Have mercy upon us O God, have mercy upon us...” ,

followed by :

“ Sanctify our souls , purify our bodies, set right our thoughts, cleanse our intentions, heal our sickness, forgive us our sins and deliver us from every evil grief and distress. Surround us with Your holy angels that we may be guided and guarded with them to attain the unity of faith and knowledge of Your imperceptible and infinite glory, for You are blessed for every. Amen.”

E

**In the Agbia prayers, we converse with God :**

**We feel that our pleadings are being heard and being responded to,** whilst we pray, especially in the Psalms, where we begin by asking and pleading, and end in a spirit of rejoice and thanksgiving. This is because we feel God's presence and response.

**Examples of Psalms are as follows :**





### **Psalm 3:**

We begin with, “Lord, how they have increased those who trouble me, many are they who rise up against me,” and conclude with, “I cried to the Lord with my voice and He heard me from His holy hill.”

### **Psalm 6:**

We begin with, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure,” and conclude with, “Depart from me all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication, the Lord will receive my prayer.”

## **Psalm 3:**

**We begin with,** “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?”

**and conclude with,** “But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me.”

Thus, by the end of the Agbia prayers, the person is full of peace.

F

The Agbia prayers give us the chance to meet with Christ moment by moment, throughout the day:

In the Morning Prayer we enjoy the Divine Incarnation in our beloved Lord's birth.

**In the Third Hour prayer**, in addition to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, we remember the unjust trial of our Lord Jesus Christ.



**In the Sixth Hour prayer, we witness the salvation on the Cross of our Lord's Crucifixion.**

**In the Ninth Hour prayer, we witness the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, for our sake in order that we may live.**

**In the Eleventh Hour (Sunset) prayer, we watch as Christ's Body is being taken down from the Cross.**



**In the Twelfth Hour (Before Sleeping) prayer**, we follow as our Lord is being buried in the tomb, and we wait for His Resurrection.

**In the Midnight Prayer**, we arise to pray, in order that we may be ready for the Second Coming of Christ.



G

The Agbia prayers contain prayers and teachings:

we are taught through the readings from the Holy Bible; the Epistles and the Psalms: **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinner, nor sits in the seat of the scornful”** (Psalm 1:1).

**For many reasons, it is very important for us to pray with the Agbia in our houses**

**We must give care to how we pray, rather than how long we are praying for.**

**Mar Isaac says,**

**“If you want to enjoy the sweetness of the Psalms and the Holy Spirit in your service, do not count how many Psalms you have prayer, but instead, concentrate on what you are praying and understand it, then you will truly feel like praising the Lord.”**

## **( 2 ) Individual Prayers :**

**We have to care also for praying individual prayers in our houses; we might pray these between Agbia prayers or at the end of the Agbia prayers. These individual prayers should follow certain characteristics:**

1

In reverence because we stand in the presence of God

## A - In reverence

**We begin speaking** with God by first prostrating before Him, hence resembling the twenty four priests **in heaven: “The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power’”** (Revelation 4:10-11).

In doing this, we also resembling the heavenly hosts: **“All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God”** (Revelation 7:11).



## B - As children of God:

**Although He is the almighty God,** in amazing love He humbled Himself and was incarnated as man for us. He freed us from the slavery of Satan and transformed us from being servants to being His children. For this reason, we pray, **“Our Father...”**. Through His loving sacrifice and crucifixion, He restored to us our heavenly image and made us His children.



## C - In hope and confidence:

**Confidence in His unlimited love**, which was declared to us on the cross. If we ask of God, and He feels it is for our good and our salvation, He will not deprive us from it. We not only believe in His infinite love, but also in His unlimited ability. In His complete love He listens to us, and in His complete might He responds. **“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”** (John 1:3). Hence we believe that when we pray, the Lord will respond in His time.

## D - In Submission:

As we trust in His love and might, we submit our lives into His hands, **“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven”**.

At the Wedding in Cana of Galilee our beloved mother St. Mary put forward the problem before Christ: **“They have no wine”** (John 2:3), and in complete confidence said to the servants, **“Whatever He says to you do it ”** (John 2:5)

**In love,** He responded to her and turned the water into wine, even though His hour had not yet come. Therefore, we need only to present our needs before God, careful not to impose our wants on Him, but saying, together with St Mary who responded to the Angel Gabriel, **“Let it be according to your word”** (Luke 1:38).

2

The prayer should be in words that  
all the family members  
participating can understand and  
benefit from :

**A - In simple words** that are easy enough  
for the young to understand.

**B - The words should be relevant  
concerning all the needs of the  
young and old alike.**

**C - Everyone should** have a turn to pray, because this encourages them to pray to God and to talk to Him. It also makes the young feel that there is a special relationship existing between them and God, and that God also listens to the young.



# 3

## Structured according to the Church's organization :

**Our church has taught us to start all our prayers and services with the Thanksgiving Prayer.** Likewise, family members should also start by thanking God for everything, because He is the only one who knows our needs and what is good for us. Our teacher Paul the Apostle pleaded with God many times in order to be relieved from the thorn in his body, but God refused, granting him rather many gifts and talents. The Lord left the pain to exist in his body in order to remind him of the Lord's sufferings, and so partake in His sufferings.

**Thus St Paul says: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philemon 3:10)**

In our prayers, it is important for us to teach our family members that it is first important for us to ask for God's kingdom and His righteousness. We ask God for the forgiveness of our sins, and we ask Him to make us worthy of enjoying His holy company. We ask Him to lift us above bodily and worldly desires,

to give us purity of heart and an upright spirit :

**“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:10).**

# 4

## In love

**A person who prays fervently, forgets about themselves and prays for the needs of others. There was once a man who had a severe heart disease. When St Mary used to appear in her church in Zeitoun (Cairo) in 1968,**

**he went to the church in order to see her and plead for his sickness. As soon as he saw her blessed apparition, he forgot all about himself and prayed for others instead. After a few days, he remembered that he had not taken his tablets for many days, and realised that he had been cured. If you cannot give to the poor, comfort the grieved, feed the hungry or turn back a sinner from his sinful ways; at least if you cannot do this, pray for him, and through the power of Jesus Christ, your prayers will work in him.**

**My dear  
brethren**

**relieve the pains of  
others through  
your prayers.**

**Remember the words  
of St Paul:**

**“Remember the  
prisoners as if  
chained with them  
– those who are  
mistreated – since  
you yourselves are  
in the body also”  
(Hebrews 13:3).**

**My dear  
brethren**



**Remember that it is your responsibility to pray for others, moreover, not praying for them is a sin ...**

**as Samuel the prophet says: “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Samuel 12:23).**

**Let us teach our children to pray for everyone:**

**for the safety of the church, the Pope, the Bishops, the priests, their Sunday school servants. To pray for their country, its leader and people, to pray for anyone who helped them in any way. To pray for our enemies, as Jesus taught us: ”  
But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). St Stephen prayed for those who stoned him: “Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin’ ” (Acts 7:60). Let us learn from our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed for His crucifiers: “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’ ” (Luke 23:34).**

### **( 3 ) Church Hymns and Praises:**

**It is also beneficial for the family prayers to contain hymns and praises, so that the tunes and hymns said in Church will not be foreign to our ears.**



**My dear and beloved brethren, Where is the church that is in your house? Where are the family prayers that gather all your family members together ?**

**Place and time for family prayers:**

**Being in close contact with God will ensure our prayers are said with spiritual warmth. They will enlighten us so that we may become unto others a light, as the Lord said:**

**“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).**

**Also we will be a means of spiritual blessing to everyone around us.**

## ( A ) The Place :



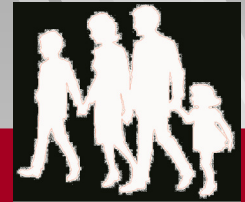
**There should be a specific room or place within the house that is used only for family prayer.**

The Lord Jesus used to go to an isolated place with His disciples to pray. He even spent forty days in a holy retreat in the wilderness before starting His ministry.

**Within this quiet place in the house,** we can close our eyes and forget all about the world, in order to enjoy the presence and sight of He who is more beautiful than human beings, and so lift our minds up to the unseen world, living in the glories of Heaven. When we pray in this place, we feel as if we are on Mount Tabour, where we can see our Master Christ transfigured, but not with Moses and Elijah, as He did in the past, but rather with us, being inside us.

**Hence after our prayers, being enlightened in the spirit, we shall also be a light to others, leading them to eternal life.** In the place of prayers, we can see, through the eyes of our heart, the ladder, joining heaven to earth and the angels ascending carrying our prayers to heaven and descending carrying the Divine gifts which fill our hearts and life.

Thus, we can say with Jacob: **“And he was afraid and said, ‘how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven’”** (Genesis 28:17).



**In the place of prayers,**

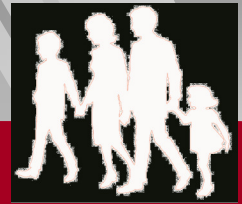
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Hence, not only will our faces be illuminated, like Moses, but likewise our hearts, minds and whole life.

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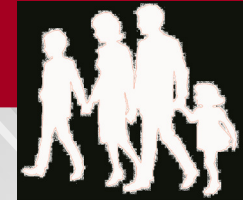
it will be as if we are alone with Jesus in Gethsemane. But instead of seeing Him praying with tears for us, we see ourselves before Him in reverence, not reluctantly as the disciples had done, but in happiness, enjoying our prayers and praising Him saying: “To You is the power and glory and honour and blessings forever Amen.”



**After a weary day,**

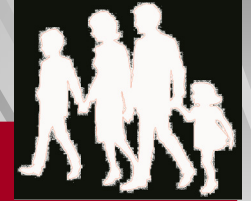
we stand before Him to pray,  
struggling as if in Golgotha. We are  
not present as an audience,  
but as sharers in His pain, crucifying  
ourselves and being united with  
Him on the Cross

**We proceed in eagerness to this place  
early,**



as if we are going to witness Christ's Resurrection, but even more, we finish our prayers feeling resurrected with Christ and in Christ.

Hence, we start our day with the power of Resurrection, defeating our enemy, the devil.



**We enter the place of prayer,**

as if ascending to the Mount of Olives, not to see Jesus ascending to heaven, but to enjoy accompanying Him to heaven. We meditate on eternity,

and feel as if we are surrounding His throne in heaven, with the twenty four priests who praise Him who sits upon the Throne.

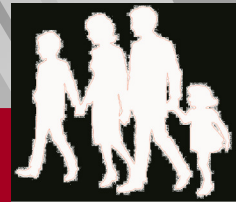


**In this place, it is as if we are in Paradise,**

enjoying the spirits of the saints and angels who attend our prayers.

For this reason, it is important for us to prepare within our houses, a specific place for prayers. It should be in a quiet location within the house, and decorated with pictures of the Crucifix, the Transfiguration, the saints of intercession for each member of the family...

## ( B ) The Time of Prayers:



**The Holy Bible teaches us, “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1), and, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). For family prayers we need to appoint a time which suits everyone. It should be at least twice a day; morning and evening.**

# The Morning Prayers...



**Where all the family members meet God and His saints before meeting anyone else. We start with the, “Our Father...” in order to feel that God the Father is waiting for us and stretching His arms out to embrace His children.**

**We conclude the Morning Agbia Prayer with, “We thank You our eternal King, for You passed us through the night in peace and brought us to the beginning of the day. Therefore we ask You, our King, may Your light shine upon us, and may You enlighten us with the light of Your divine knowledge. Make us children of light, children of daytime, that we may complete this day in righteousness, purity and good order and that we may complete the rest of our life without any blame..” in addition to, “Enlighten our minds, hearts and understanding O Master.”**

# The Evening Prayers ...

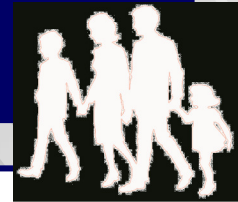


The Evening Prayer is very important no matter how tired we are. St Paul and Silas, after having been tortured and undergone several trials, were gaoled, being tied with chains, **“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25).**

The pains and bondages did not prevent them from praying but rather, they were praising with enthusiasm and fervency so that the other prisoners heard them. On the other hand, we saw how the disciples slept and could not stay awake with Jesus, to watch and pray. They became weak and, **“Then they all forsook Him and fled” (Mark 14:50).**

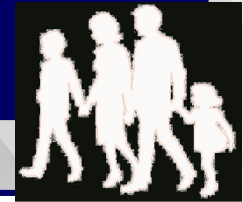
They could not face the temptation without the Heavenly Grace which is gained from prayers.

## B - To give an account for all our deeds during the day,



we pour ourselves before Him, and ask for forgiveness. Hence, in the Prayer Before Sleeping we pray: "For the sake of Your holy name Lord, for Your goodness and love to mankind, forgive us those sins we committed against You this day, whether they are by action, by words, by thought or any of our senses."

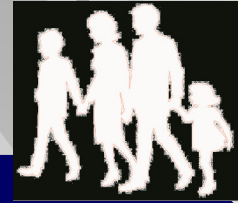
## C - To ask for His grace and love to keep our sleep peaceful,



hence we pray in the Sunset Prayer : “In this coming night, give us peace without pain or anxiety or fatigue or illusion so we may pass through the night in peace and chastity.” Also in the Prayer Before Sleeping: “Grant us a peaceful night and give us a sleep free of all anxiety, send us the guardian angel to protect us from every evil, temptation or the strike of the enemy.”

**As we prepare a place and time for prayers,** we also need to prepare our hearts. Therefore it is not appropriate that we watch television, and then proceed to pray, for there would be no feelings of prayer. Likewise, we cannot proceed to prayer after having a heated argument with someone. **Let me tell you that if this is the case, we will never benefit from prayers, even if we continued praying until sunrise...**

# Therefore



everyone of us needs to experience a time of quiet and calm before praying; a time to sit at the feet of Christ through reading the Holy Bible. We have to prepare our hearts spiritually, in order to enjoy the transfiguration with our beloved Lord Jesus.