

APPENDIX B: ALTERNATIVE PRAYER SERVICES

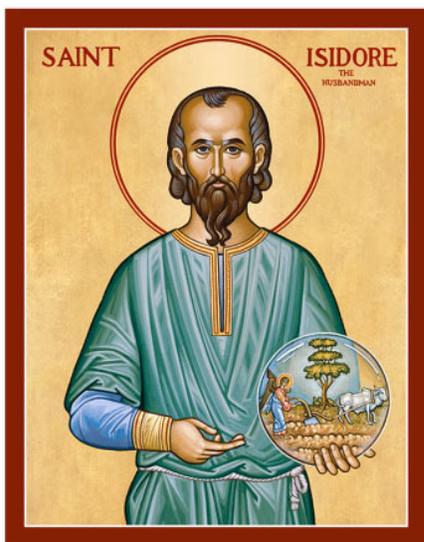
THE FOLLOWING ARE ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR USE IN A PRAYER SERVICE DURING A RURAL LIFE CELEBRATION. THESE ARE DIFFERENT PRAYERS, BLESSINGS, ACTIVITIES AND LITANIES FOR SMALL GROUPS OR LARGE GROUPS. THEY HAVE BEEN COLLECTED FROM VARIOUS PEOPLE AND REPRESENT A VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. THESE MAY BE USED IN PART, IN FULL, OR FOR IDEAS.

LITANY OF SAINT ISIDORE

Introduction

We, as farmers and gardeners, have a sacred calling because we are collaborators with God in the work of creation. In partnership with God, we provide food, fiber, and shelter for all. As a rural people, tillers of the soil, we have special gifts and challenges as we care for and use the earth and its riches.

We have the use of soil, water, and air, and are challenged to steward these natural resources. We are challenged to take good care of them, to share them generously, and to pass them on to others in at least as good of condition as when we started using them.



St. Isidore, who lived as a farmer in Spain during the 12th century, has been designated patron of farmers. He was a very prayerful man with particular devotion to the Mass and Holy Communion. He loved his work as a farmer, and is said to have had a special relationship with and influence on the animals he worked with. As he plowed the fields, it is said that his boss saw two angels helping Isidore. Thus, the saying arose "St. Isidore, plowing with angels, did the work of three farmers."

Let us join, now, in praying the Litany of St. Isidore. This prayer recalls for us some of the traits of Isidore, our patron and model. In it we ask for his help on our journey as a rural people, a people close to the land and to God.

Litany

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us.
 Lord, have mercy on us.
 Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.
 God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
 God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
 Holy Mary, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, pray for us.

Litany (Continued)

St. Isidore, patron of farmers, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, illustrious tiller of the soil, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, model of laborers, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, devoted to duty, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, loaded down with the labors of the field, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, model of filial piety, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, support of family life, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, confessor of the faith, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, example of mortification, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, assisted by angels, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, possessor of the gift of miracles, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, burning with lively faith, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, zealous in prayer, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, ardent lover of the blessed sacrament, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, lover of God's earth, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, lover of poverty, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, lover of humankind, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most patient, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most humble, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most pure, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most just, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most obedient, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most faithful, pray for us.
 St. Isidore, most grateful, pray for us.
 Jesus our Lord, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would protect all tillers of the soil, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would bring to all a true knowledge of the stewardship of the land, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would preserve and increase our fields and flocks, we beg of you, hear us.

That you would give and preserve the fruits of the earth, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would bless our fields, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would preserve all rural pastors, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would grant harmony in our homes, we beg of you, hear us.
 That you would lift up our hearts to you, we beg of you, hear us.
 Be merciful, spare us, O Lord. Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Lord.
 From lightning and tempest, deliver us, O Lord.
 From pestilence and flood, deliver us, O Lord.
 From winds and drought, deliver us, O Lord.
 From hail and storm, deliver us, O Lord.
 From the scourge of insects, deliver us, O Lord.
 From the spirit of selfishness, deliver us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
 Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.
 Grant, O Lord, that through the intercession of St. Isidore and his wife, St. Maria, we may follow their example of patience and humility, and so walk faithfully in his footsteps that in the evening of life we may be able to present to you an abundant harvest of merit and good works, Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.

The Introduction to the Litany of Saint Isidore and the Litany of Saint Isidore are taken from Catholic Rural Life's Rural Life Prayerbook, ©1956.

DEDICATION OF SEED, WATER, SOIL AND WORKERS

Introduction

At the beginning of the planting season it is customary for farmers to seek God's blessing on their crops. As the seeds are planted, God is asked to protect them from disease and destruction and to bring forth them an abundant yield.

(For this dedication, four people and a leader can be appointed to participate. Items needed are seeds, a pitcher of water, and a small amount of soil.)

Blessing

Leader We are assembled for the purpose of dedicating the seed that shall be planted, the water that will nourish the seed, the soil that shall be cultivated, and the sowers that labor to the service of God and for the good of humankind. (Say to the person with seed) What have you brought before the Lord and the people this day?

Person 1 I have brought seed, which represents various types of seed that shall be planted in this community. When sown it will bring forth fruit, food and fiber, so that children may eat and become strong, so that the wheels of industry may turn and so that life may be maintained among all. This seed is holy, for it contains life, and all seed shall be counted as holy in the sight of God. It will be planted with faith and cultivated and harvested with gratitude. (Person gives seed to leader.)

Leader (to person with water) and what have you brought before the Lord and the people this day?

Person 2 The soil will be watered by the rains of God. I have brought water as a reminder of its necessity for the growth of the seed and for all of life. The waters of life remind us of God, the giver of all life. (presents pitcher of water)

Leader (to person with soil) And what have you brought before the Lord and the people this day?

Person 3 I have brought soil, the good earth of this community in which seed is planted in hope, and from which the harvest shall be anticipated with joy. This soil, this earth, is the result of the creative activity of God. It was created by God for all of life. It contains the minerals, salts and fertilizers necessary to nourish the seed and bring forth sturdy plants capable of producing food for all life. It will be warmed by the sunshine of God. This soil is holy and shall be cultivated and cared for as a gift of God. (presents soil)

Leader (to fourth person) What have you brought before the people this day?



PRAYER OF BLESSING

Dedication (Continued)

Person 4 I represent the sowers of the seed. I have brought myself -my mind, my body, and my talents to be dedicated as God's co-worker in the sowing and cultivating of the seed. I represent not only myself, but all the farmers and gardeners of the world who hope for a peaceful world in which our talents may find their fulfillment. We dedicate ourselves to bringing about this kind of world.

Leader Let us all dedicate ourselves. Celebrating God's good gifts helps us remember God's call, that we hunger and thirst for what is right and just and that we share God's creation with all who are in need. Together, let us pray.

Leader and People We thank you, O God, that you have given us the seed, the water and soil upon which all of us depend. Fill our hearts with a sense of the seriousness of the responsibility in caring for them. Guide us as we sow, in order that the seed may fall on good soil. May we be ever conscious of your presence while we work. Amen.



Introduction

A prayer of blessing and adoration is one that offers adoration and thanks to God for his role in a life.

Prayer

Leader O God, source of all light and life, we acknowledge the responsibility you have given us as people of the rural countryside.

People We are grateful for day and night and for seasons unending in their yearly course.

Leader You depend on some of us to plant seed, till the crops, and reap the harvest. You depend on some of us to grow food for people in cities and seed for another year.

People We thank you that you give us so great a task.

Leader May it be that all who live in city or country will realize the true value of food and water.

People We pray, O God, that you will make us faithful stewards of food, water and all the resources you have provided.

Leader O God, source of all light and life, though we have hurt ourselves with waste and pollution, you are ever with us and never fail us. We pray for your continuing care, in the name of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Introduction

A prayer of repentance is one in which we turn away from the evil and distractions and look to God and how he would like us to live.

Prayer

Leader Creator and preserver of all life, we come to you for wisdom in renewing the balances of our environment. We have discovered many ways of using the resources you have provided, but we have often failed to think and act unselfishly.

People Forgive us and help us, we pray.

Leader We are creating deserts where trees and other vegetation once grew, and where brooks and streams flowed. The lack of food, water and the lack of shelter for all your people are the evils that we must endure.

People We confess our lack of concern for the balances you have set in the atmosphere. We have polluted the air all people must breathe and we are causing both floods and drought. Teach us to understand your good plan, that the earth may again have pure air, and that rainfall may be good for all living things.

Leader We are thankful for your patience with us, and for your forgiveness. We thank you that there is still time. Renew our earth, O God, and we offer ourselves that your will may be done. Amen.

PRAYER FOR STEWARDSHIP

Introduction

A prayer for stewardship is one that thanks God for all that He has given to us as well as the talents we have thanks to Him.

Prayer

Leader O Lord, you have given us the gift of land.

People May we ever protect and preserve it.

Leader O Lord, you have given us the gift of water.

People May we keep it pure and safe.

Leader O Lord, you have given us the gift of air.

People May we keep it pure and fresh.

Leader O Lord, you have given us the gift of plants and trees.

People May we use and protect them justly.

Leader O Lord, you have given us the care of the earth.

All O Lord, we accept the care of the gifts of the earth as a sacred stewardship. Amen.



STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Introduction

A prayer for stewardship is one that thanks God for all that He has given to us as well as the talents we have thanks to Him.

Prayer

Leader We come into God's presence as sowers of stewardship.

People For God has made everything in its season.

Leader The pathways of life can leave our discipleship exposed to the birds of ignorance.

People Hear us, O God.

Leader The rocky ground of easy success may temper our deep commitment to faithful stewardship.

People Hear us, O God.

Leader May we resist the thorns of temptation when they call us to cheap pleasures.

People Hear us, O God.

Leader The firm soil of Your presence, can grow good fruit thirtyfold.

People All people praise Thy name together.

Leader The fertile soil of our steadfast stewardship can produce sixty fold.



People All people praise Thy name together.

Leader From the deep soil of our faith in God will come forth a harvest one hundred fold.

People All people praise Thy name together.

Leader They who have ears, let them hear the strength of God's word.

People Glory be to Thee, Creator, Redeemer, God only wise. Amen.

PRAYER FOR SPRINGTIME

Introduction

A prayer for springtime reflects on the new life that has arose and all new life that is to come.

Prayer

Leader We thank you, Lord, for the joyous springtime, when we can work in partnership with you to produce food for a hungry world.

People Keep us humbly mindful of our dependence upon you, our Creator.

Leader Upon the good seed, sea and earth, which you have given to your servants, we now ask your blessing.

People Bless with fertility the seed, the animals of the fields, and the fish of the sea.

Leader Send rain to refresh the earth, and sunshine to warm the ocean's depths.

People Allow your blessing to fall upon all forms of life in the oceans of the world, and on the flocks and herds which you have given to your people, O Lord.

Leader Grant to us, your children, strength and patience to care for nets, crops, trees and herds.

People Of the increase we shall surely give a dedicated portion to you, our God.

Leader Because you have made us and we are yours, we present ourselves to you as our supreme gift.

People Help us to be your true children. Give us clean hands and a pure heart. Give us grace to become more like our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Introduction

A prayer of thanksgiving acknowledges the gratitude of God's blessings upon us.

Prayer

Leader For the marvelous grace of your creation, we pour out our thanks to you, our God.

People For the sun and moon and stars, for rain and dew and winds, for winter cold and summer heat.

Leader We pour forth our praise to you.

People For mountains and hills, for springs and valleys, for rivers and seas.

Leader We praise you, O Lord.

People For plants growing in earth and water, for life inhabiting lakes and seas, for life creeping in soils and land, for creatures living in wetland and waters, for life flying above earth and sea, for beasts dwelling in woods and fields.

CONSIDER AS YOU SOW

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Continued)

Leader How many wonderful are your works, our God!

People In wisdom you have made them all.

Leader May thy kingdom come and they will be done on earth! In our hearts, Lord, we promise anew.

People To reverence creation as a convincing witness of your presence, eternal power, and divine majesty.

Leader We promise to reverence your creation as a gracious gift.

People Entrusted to us by you, our God.

Leader We promise anew to be stewards.

People And not pillagers of what you have entrusted to us.

Leader Creator God, you have given us every reason to learn and promote the wisdom of lives lived in harmony with creation.

People May we, your servants, increasingly serve. May we, your servants, increasingly come to love your creation as we also increasingly come to love you, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Written by Edward Hays for *Prayers for the Domestic Church*. Printed by Permission of Forest of Peace, Easton, Kansas 66020

And on the sixth day, God ordered the earth to bring /
Forth humanity to have dominion over each living thing /
To share in the blessings of the land, sea and air /
And the Word went forth to those far and near.

God's commands were made to sow and to reap, /
To work diligently, to harvest and to wisely keep /
The earth fertile and to nourish the need /
Of all God's children who must go forward and lead.

In the stewardship of the land against the time /
When the environment could be doomed by humanity's crime /
Of neglect and profit at the expense of God's creation /
Thus leaving the earth ravaged beyond all salvation.

We must foresee that the earth is guaranteed /
To protection against our own destructive greed that allows a wetland to be drained or a forest cut down /
To be replaced with a highway or a high-rise town.

God's Word must be heeded -and learning must replace /
Mistaken priorities to protect the human race /
From the fate that has fallen on much of nature's design /
Careless extinction of life and land by the neglect we find.

Care must be taken by people in all the world's nations /
To sow the seeds of tomorrow for future generations. /
Seeds of stewardship sown by following God's commands /
Making human efforts an extension of God's hands. /
Consider as you sow, you shall reap.



BLESSING THE TREE

Introduction

A tree planting service might be used at the planting of a tree in memory of the death of a loved one or member of your community, commemorate a significant beginning or ending or an event brought to life in your congregation, to celebrate an anniversary, a birth or a significant change, or a tree blessing could be used when a tree is planted to bring life and beauty to the earth.

Blessing

O God of life, be with us! Come, stand with us in what we are doing! We have opened the earth and prepared this soil to receive this tree. As the womb receives the seed and nurtures it to maturity, bless this soil, Lord, and make it fertile; bless this tree, Lord, and make it a symbol of our hope in you and in each other. You will water the earth with rain and we will irrigate this planting, to assure its growth so the birds can come to nest in its branches. In the same way, make living waters flow into and through our lives to make this community a place where your people will live peaceably for generations to come. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing Prayer for the Planting of a Tree

Lord and Holy Creator of trees and forests, come and place your blessing of life upon this tree that we are planting today. In the Garden of Eden, you planted both the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. May this tree be a tree of life to all the earth, may its leaves breath forth the life-breath of oxygen. May its branches be living space for those who climb among them and for birds of the air that shall nest there. May those in need of shelter from the summer heat find in its shade a refreshing refuge.

May it give to all who look upon it the gift of life - renewing beauty. We sprinkle it with water, sacred sign of life, asking that it may be embraced by our mother the earth, fed by rain and kissed gently by the sun. In caring for this tree we shall experience the most ancient profession of the human family, the primal vocation of being workers in the garden.

As blessing, peace and life were the fruits of the tree of the cross of your son, Jesus, may those same fruits flow from this tree, which we plant in your holy name, Creator, Redeemer, and Counselor. Amen.