

# Praying to the Father through the Son

*To the College of Bishops and the Church from the Custodian of the BCP (2019)*

Following the teaching of our Lord and of the Holy Scriptures, prayer has always been addressed to the Father through (or in the Name of) the Son. Jesus, in the passion discourse of John's Gospel, three times directs his followers to pray by "asking the Father in my Name." [John 16:23; 15:16; 14:13]

New Testament epistles similarly instruct us that the mediator [I Timothy 2:5] between God and humanity is Jesus Christ, who "always lives to make intercession for" us. [Hebrews 7:25.] In Romans 7:25, Christian prayer is modeled when St. Paul writes: "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Further, the Apostle instructs us that it is the Holy Spirit who actually gives us the words, in line with the will of the Father, to our "groanings too deep for words." [Romans 8:26, 27]

The Tradition, from the earliest recorded prayers and manifest in the Book of Common Prayer through all its editions, therefore addresses prayer to the Father [Almighty God, etc.] through the Son. Very unusually prayer is addressed directly to the Son – as in the final prayer of the Good Friday liturgy [BCP, p.577] – in which case the conclusion of the prayer is a precisely structured trinitarian doxology. In the rarest case, a prayer is addressed to the Holy Spirit – as in the prayer of Preparation for Personal Prayer [BCP, p.675] – which nevertheless is prayed "through Jesus Christ my Lord."

Anglican Christians are arguably foremost among those whose witness is that right praying produces right believing (*lex orandi, lex credendi*).

In recent years there has been a temptation to end free prayers "in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." This is actually a serious distortion of Biblical teaching and of the Christian tradition of prayer. We need to lovingly dial this practice down, and certainly as leaders not to model this unwitting corruption. The historic place for "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." is as "invocation" at the beginning of prayer not as "mediation" in the ending of prayers. There is only one Mediator, and only one mediation [ending] to prayer, and that is "through (or in the Name of) Jesus Christ our Lord." Otherwise just end, "Amen."

*Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, anno domini 2021*