

**T**his booklet is filled with prayers and blessings for mealtimes. Maybe you picked it up because you want to start a new family tradition of mealtime prayers. Or maybe prayer at mealtimes is already an important part of your family life and you are looking for new ideas. Maybe you don't know why you picked up this booklet; you are just curious about what is in it.

Whatever your reason, this collection offers creative ways to help families grow closer to God and to one another at mealtimes. Prayer at mealtimes invites God to be part of your family. It teaches children not only methods of prayer but the power of prayer. It helps them understand the many ways God is present in our lives and instills in them a sense of gratitude for all the good things they have been given. It allows each member of the family to form a spiritual bond with God and with one another that becomes interwoven with the fabric of daily life. It elevates the hearts and minds of each family member to a deeper spiritual level that is

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filled with meaning and infused with love.

For easy use, the booklet is divided into sections. There are mealtime prayers and blessings for various ages, for everyday meals, and for special occasions.

Some of these prayers will resonate with you. Others may not have the same appeal. That's okay. The purpose of this booklet is to offer ideas. Latch onto what works for your family and let go of what doesn't. You might even find that the Holy Spirit will inspire you with new prayer ideas of your own.

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# Prayers and Blessings for Little Children

## **START SMALL AND BUILD**

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Keep prayers simple with little ones. You might want to start with a short prayer that you can repeat each day. Encourage your child to say the words with you or to say “Amen” at the end. As time goes on, you can add new words and ideas to your prayer. Here are some short prayers that can grow over time:

*Thank you, Lord, for our food. Amen.*

*Thank you, Lord, for our food and our family. Amen.*

*Thank you, Lord, for our home, our food,  
and our family. Amen.*

*Thank you, Lord, for our health, our home,  
our food, and our family. Amen.*

*Thank you for our lives, our health, our home, our food,  
and our family. Amen.*

## **RHYME TIME**

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Toddlers and small children respond to words and phrases that rhyme or have rhythm. You can fall back on a traditional mealtime prayer, such as:

*God is great! God is good!*

*Let us thank him for our food. Amen.*

Or you can create your own rhyming prayer. Here are some hints for rhyming:

- “Prayer” rhymes with care, fair, pair, hair, stair, chair, wear, where, there, etc.
- “Pray” rhymes with day, stay, lay, may, say, ray, tray, way, etc.
- “Blessed” rhymes with dressed, messed, guest, nest, pressed, rest, etc.
- “Meal” rhymes with deal, feel, heal, real, seal, peel, etc.
- “Eat” rhymes with feet, heat, meet, meat, neat, seat, sheet, treat, etc.

### **SING A PRAYER**

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Singing a prayer together as a family is a wonderful way to thank the Lord. The words and the melody settle into each person’s heart and mind in a way that is unforgettable. Singing a prayer is especially beneficial for little ones, who may find it easier to remember a song than the words of a prayer.

You can find mealtime songs recorded by professional singers on the internet. Or you can create a personal family prayer song by adding your own words to a familiar tune.

End your song with a rousing “Amen!” For example:

*To the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”:*

*Thank you, Jesus, for this food.*

*Thank you for our family.*

*Thank you for the love you give.*

*Thank you for our place to live.*

*Keep us safe and help us grow.*

*Teach us all we need to know. Amen.*

*To the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down”:*

*Thank you, Lord, for food to eat,  
food to eat, food to eat.*

*Thank you, Lord, for all good things.*

*And each other. Amen.*

## Prayers and Blessings for Older Children

### **GRACE BEFORE MEALS**

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It’s a good idea to teach your children the traditional Catholic mealtime prayer, which is often referred to as “Grace before Meals.” The word “grace” comes from the Latin *gratia*, which means “gratitude” or “thanks.”

The words of this prayer have been passed down through the centuries, dating back to the Gelasian Sacramentary in the eighth century. It is a prayer that your children will hear prayed frequently at mealtime events in the Catholic community. The prayer asks for God's blessing on us and on our food and acknowledges that what we are about to eat is a gift from God.

*Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are about to receive from your bounty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### **GRACE AFTER MEALS**

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The tradition of asking God's blessing after meals dates back to ancient times and this Scripture passage: "You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Here is the traditional Catholic prayer for after meals (it thanks God, praises God, and adds a prayer at the end for the souls of those who have gone before us):

*We give you thanks for all your gifts, Almighty God, who lives and reigns world without end. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

It is wise to teach your children this prayer, but for most

busy families, a more practical after-dinner prayer might be simply “Thank you, God, for everything!”

### **GOD BLESS...**

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Asking for God’s blessing is a simple but powerful way to pray. Start by asking God to bless the food you are about to eat. Then ask your family: What do you want to ask God to bless? Go around the table so each person can express the people, places, or things they would like God to bless.

When we ask God to bless someone or something, we are asking God for love, care, and protection. We are asking for holiness. We are acknowledging that everything we have, everything we are, and everything we need comes from God.

### **PRAYER TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL**

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The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* assures us that throughout our lives, we are surrounded by the watchful care of a Guardian Angel (CCC 336). Belief in the existence of a Guardian Angel can be extremely comforting to children as they make their way through the ups and downs of each day.

The traditional Guardian Angel prayer might be a good prayer for school-age children. You might want to incorporate this simple prayer into whatever blessing your family offers before or after breakfast.