

# UNIVERSAL PRAYERS FROM FAITH TRADITIONS

Dr M.D. Thomas

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**‘Prayer’ is a request addressed to the Divine.** The word ‘pray’ comes from the Latin word ‘precari’, which means ‘ask, implore, beseech, entreat and supplicate’. It is a reverential petition or ardent soliciting. It is stretching up a direct line with the heavens in terms of one’s perspectives and aspirations of life.

**‘Prayer’ implies the twin truth about oneself and God.** It substantiates the basic realities of one’s life. It is a firm pronouncement of one’s humble status as a created being. It is an implicit recognition of the presence of a power that is higher than oneself. It is an undeniable proof that one is irresistibly drawn towards that Supreme Creative Power that is called God. It is an effort to rise above oneself and a sustained attempt to attain that Divine at any cost.

**‘Prayer’ is a relationship with the Divine.** It is a person-to-person conversation with God, as a child does with its father. It is a spiritual communication between human being and God. It is a two-way affiliation. It involves speaking and listening as well as giving and receiving. The disciple expresses his or her finest sentiments of devotion to the Divine Master. The Divine Master lovingly whispers to his devotee, as well. The relationship reaches the extent of communing with the Divine. The sublime outcome of such a communion is a never-ending celebration of mystical niceties, at which point human language surrenders all its efforts to articulate.

**‘Prayer’ expresses itself in diverse forms.** It expresses a sense of marvel at the mysterious wonder of divine creation, to the extent of leaving the one who prays speechless! It contains praises for God for the above reason. It proceeds to give thanks to God for whatever the person concerned has received. Humble confession of one’s failings in life also can be a prayer. Prayer can include even complaints about another or about God himself. It culminates in offering to God whatever one has achieved in life. It could take the form of suggesting to oneself what is good and noble in life. It might even attempt a self-realizing process of enlightenment leading to heights beyond limits.

**‘Prayer’ brings immense benefits.** It makes the way for a relished companionship with God. It receives guidance from God. It helps assess the will of God for one’s life. It gathers the scattered energies of the person. It facilitates one’s attentiveness by focusing on the central driving force in life. It fosters concentration and a meditative depth in life. It coordinates the entire gamut of one’s experiences. It heals the wounds and hurts of life. It works as a self-therapy. It straightens the path of life. It builds up confidence for treading it, as well. It touches the core of one’s person. It transforms one’s entire style of life. It refines and enriches one’s life immensely. It gives the strength and wisdom required for living one’s life. It facilitates better decision, especially at cross-roads. It awakens and sharpens one spiritual

sense. It refines and tunes one's mindset to that of the Divine. It ameliorates the quality and worth of human life.

**'Prayer' is universal in its finer forms.** It may originate from different geographical, cultural and historical contexts. But, its finer forms have unquestionably to rise above the boundaries of the religious confines. It may have originated in the hearts of great men and women of particular belongings. Nevertheless, it can be prayed by anyone, irrespective of his or her worldview or background of faith. It can be prayed anywhere and everywhere. It is for all seasons and occasions. It transcends the limits of ethnic origin, caste, class, creed, gender, language, ideology, culture and nationality. That is how it becomes really universal, according meaning to every human being beyond spatio-temporal demarcations.

**'Universal Prayers from Faith Traditions'** – This number of the multi-faith journal 'Fellowship' carries a series of 'lovely prayers' from diverse traditions of perspectives and faiths. They are grounded in the great Sacred Scriptures of the world. They emerge from the exceptionally lofty spiritual experiences of Divine Masters. Various celebrated persons of religious and social persuasions have contributed to this collection, as well. These universal prayers do not belong to any religion. They form a communion of faiths. They are a valuable treasure of world class spirituality, which is born of a superb harmony between refined human experience and overwhelming Divine gift. They meet on the same level, without any petite considerations. They are a community of heavenly experiences. Alone, each one is certainly rich. But, together they are much richer. They incarnate the Divine among us, urging us to imbibe the celestial spirit of harmony of faiths and harmony in social life. They elevate us from wherever we are at present.

**'Universal Prayers from Faith Traditions' pose a question to us!** Could these 'universal and heavenly prayers' not elevate us -- fellow pilgrims of diverse affiliations -- to celebrate the same Divine Power together? Could they not empower us to walk together in life? Could they not have our hearts and minds united, so that our society will evolve into an ever more harmonious place to have our being? It takes courage to answer such a daring question!

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