



## Introduction: A forgotten legacy, a present urgency

In a world where faith is diluted, churches are emptied, and evil grows bolder, the Church possesses spiritual treasures that seem to have been relegated to oblivion despite their immense power. One such treasure is the **Leonine Prayers**, also known as the “**Leonine Supplications**”, a set of powerful pleas once recited at the end of every Low Mass and instituted by Pope Leo XIII. These prayers are a simple yet tremendously powerful spiritual weapon—urgently needed in these times when confusion and apostasy have infiltrated even the heart of the sacred.

This article is an invitation to rediscover, understand, appreciate, and resume the fervent use of these prayers. They are not merely pious traditions from the past, but profoundly theological and pastoral acts that connect us to the heart of the spiritual battle of our time.

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## I. Origin of the Leonine Prayers: a prophetic response to the assault of evil

The **Leonine Prayers** originated in the 19th century, specifically in **1884**, when Pope **Leo XIII**, after a mystical vision that would mark his pontificate, instituted a series of public prayers to be said **after Mass**.

According to a widely circulated and piously accepted tradition, Pope Leo XIII had a terrifying vision after celebrating Mass in the Vatican chapel: he saw Satan asking God for permission to tempt and destroy the Church over the course of a century. This vision so profoundly impacted the Holy Father that he immediately retired to his office and composed a special prayer to **Saint Michael the Archangel**, imploring his protection over the universal Church.

Alongside this prayer, he instituted a set of **public prayers**, known as the **Leonine Supplications**, to be recited kneeling after each Low Mass, **for the liberty of the Church and the conversion of sinners**. Other intentions were later added: world peace, the defense of the Papacy, and, after the seizure of the Papal States, the restoration of the Pope’s temporal power.

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## II. What are the Leonine Prayers?

The original set included:

1. **Three Hail Marys**
2. **One Hail Holy Queen (Salve Regina)**
3. **A versicle and response:**
  - *V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.*
  - *R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*
4. **A concluding prayer:**
  - *“O God, our refuge and our strength...”* (a plea for the liberty of the Church)
5. **Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel:**
  - *“Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle...”*
6. **Triple invocation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:**
  - *“Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us”* (three times)

Although simple, these prayers form a **miniature liturgy**—fervent and focused—that encompasses Marian, Christological, and angelic elements, encapsulating the Catholic spiritual life in combat mode.

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## III. Deep theological meaning: the Church in combat

The Leonine Prayers were never intended as mere devotional formulas. They are an intense expression of the **ecclesia militans**, that is, the Church as a community engaged in spiritual battle against the forces of evil.

1. **Christocentric and Marian Dimension:**

The three Hail Marys and the *Salve Regina* remind us of the constant intercession of the Virgin Mary, who is “terrible as an army set in battle array” (cf. Song of Songs 6:10), and a powerful advocate in the battles of the soul.
2. **Angelic and Apocalyptic Dimension:**

The prayer to **Saint Michael** recalls the battle described in **Revelation 12:7-9**, where Michael and his angels fight against the Dragon. In this context, the prayer is not merely symbolic but a real plea for heavenly intervention in the invisible war fought for souls.
3. **Ecclesiological Dimension:**

The supplication for the freedom of the Church, especially from worldly powers, reflects



a clear vision: **the Church will always be under siege, but never defeated**, and constantly needs the prayers of the faithful to sustain her.

4. **Sacrificial and Missionary Dimension:**

Prayed immediately after the Sacrifice of the Altar, these prayers extended the spirit of the Mass into the realm of mission, the defense of the faith, and the salvation of souls.

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## IV. History and suppression: from fervor to forgetfulness

For more than **80 years**, the Leonine Prayers were a regular part of the Church's liturgical life. But in **1964**, during the liturgical reform process leading up to the Missal of Paul VI, they were **suppressed** without a compelling theological explanation.

Nevertheless, **they were never condemned**. In fact, many faithful and traditional communities **still pray them today**, especially after the Traditional Latin Mass. The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, the Institute of Christ the King, and other communities committed to the Vetus Ordo have kept this tradition alive as a concrete form of spiritual resistance.

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## V. Practical applications today: returning to the fight on our knees

The relevance of the Leonine Prayers cannot be overstated. In a time marked by:

- Internal doctrinal attacks,
- Ideological persecution of Christians worldwide,
- Moral confusion even among the clergy,
- Loss of the sense of the sacred and abandonment of the faith,

these prayers offer a **path of reparation, supplication, and spiritual militancy**. How can we integrate them into our daily lives?

### 1. Pray the Supplications after Mass, even privately

If you attend a Mass where they are not recited, you can pray them yourself afterward. No permission is needed: it is private prayer with a public intention.



## 2. Form small groups to pray them together

A family, a prayer group, a school community—any small spiritual army can incorporate these supplications into their regular routine.

## 3. Live their spirit daily

Beyond the words, these prayers teach us to live aware of spiritual combat. As Saint Peter reminds us:

*“Be sober and vigilant. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)*

## 4. Keep them printed and visible

Having these prayers on your nightstand, in your missal, or next to your rosary is a reminder that the Christian life is not a spiritual vacation, but a battle for eternity.

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## VI. Why pray them today? A cry from the persecuted Church

Today, when it seems the smoke of Satan has entered the sanctuary itself (as Pope Paul VI warned), and when faith is being reduced to mere sentiment or humanitarianism, the Leonine Prayers stand as a silent but powerful proclamation: **the Church does not surrender; she fights on her knees.**

Like Saint Michael, like Mary, like the saints of all times, today’s Christian is called to **resist evil not just with words, but with fervent prayer**, trusting that the final victory belongs to God.

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## Conclusion: On our knees, but in battle

The Leonine Prayers are, ultimately, a prophetic act of trust, a Marian supplication, an ecclesial cry, and a communal exorcism. They require no new approval because they were



never abrogated. They are still here—like a sword sheathed, waiting for hands willing to wield it with faith.

To return to these prayers is not nostalgia or spiritual archaeology: it is **obedience to a prophetic call from the past that echoes urgently in the present.**

May each of us, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, take up this powerful devotion and echo the words of the psalmist:

“Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember the insults that fools  
hurl at you all day long.” (Psalm 74:22)

And with a final word of triumphant hope:

“*Quis ut Deus?*” — “*Who is like God?*”

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## Appendix: Full Text of the Leonine Prayers (in Latin and English)

### □ The Leonine Prayers

Text in Latin and English with Line-by-Line Explanation

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#### □ 1. Ave Maria (Hail Mary) - 3 times

**Latin:**

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;  
benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.  
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,*



*nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.*

**English:**

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;  
blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

**Explanation:**

- **“Ave Maria...”** — A greeting of praise to the Virgin Mary, taken from the Angel Gabriel’s words at the Annunciation (Luke 1:28).
- **“Gratia plena...”** — Acknowledges Mary as “full of grace”, a vessel uniquely prepared for the Incarnation.
- **“Benedicta tu...”** — Emphasizes her unique role in salvation history as the mother of Christ.
- **“Sancta Maria...”** — Petitions her intercession as the Mother of God, echoing the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.).
- **“Nunc et in hora...”** — Entrusts our soul to her at every moment, especially at the hour of death.

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## □ 2. **Salve Regina (Hail, Holy Queen)**

**Latin:**

*Salve, Regina, mater misericordiae,  
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus, exsules, filii Hevae.  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eia ergo, Advocata nostra,  
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.  
Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.  
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*

**English:**



*Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy,  
our life, our sweetness, and our hope. Hail.  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.  
To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.  
Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us.  
And after this our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

**Explanation:**

- **“Salve Regina...”** — A prayer of heartfelt longing to the Virgin, emphasizing her maternal compassion.
- **“Exsules, filii Hevae...”** — Reflects the fallen state of humanity since the sin of Eve.
- **“Valle lacrimarum...”** — A poetic expression of the sufferings of earthly life.
- **“Advocata nostra...”** — Calls on Mary as our intercessor before Christ.
- **“Post hoc exsilium...”** — A plea to see Jesus after our earthly pilgrimage ends.
- **“O clemens, O pia...”** — A triple acclamation of Mary’s gentleness, devotion, and sweetness.

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□ **3. Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel**

**Latin:**

*Sancte Michael Archangele,  
defende nos in proelio;  
contra nequitiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium.  
Imperet illi Deus, supplices deprecamur:  
tuque, Princeps militiae caelestis,  
Satanam aliosque spiritus malignos,  
qui ad perditionem animarum pervagantur in mundo,  
divina virtute in infernum detrude. Amen.*

**English:**

*Saint Michael the Archangel,  
defend us in battle;  
be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.*



*May God rebuke him, we humbly pray:  
and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host,  
by the power of God,  
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits  
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

### **Explanation:**

- **“Sancte Michael...”** — A direct invocation to the warrior archangel described in Revelation 12:7-9.
  - **“Defende nos in proelio...”** — A call for protection in spiritual combat.
  - **“Insidias diaboli...”** — Refers to the deceit and subtlety of Satan.
  - **“Imperet illi Deus...”** — God’s authority is supreme, and we appeal to His judgment over evil.
  - **“Princeps militiae caelestis...”** — St. Michael as leader of God’s heavenly army.
  - **“In infernum detrude...”** — An exorcistic plea to cast demons into hell, asserting God’s victory.
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## □ 4. **Invocation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Added by Pope Leo XIII in 1900)**

### **Latin:**

*Cor Iesu sacratissimum, miserere nobis. (3x)*

### **English:**

*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. (3x)*

### **Explanation:**

- A short but profound act of trust in Christ’s divine mercy.
  - The **Sacred Heart** symbolizes His love wounded for our sins, and this triple invocation reflects a full surrender of the soul.
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## □ Theological and Spiritual Significance

- These prayers **form a mini-litany of spiritual warfare and intercession**, calling upon **Mary, Saint Michael, and Jesus Himself**.
  - They were **instituted by Pope Leo XIII** in the 1880s as a response to the **dangers threatening the Church**, especially secularism and the loss of the Papal States.
  - The **Prayer to Saint Michael**, added after a vision the Pope reportedly had in 1884, is a **powerful weapon against demonic forces**, now widely used in exorcism rites and personal devotions.
  - The **Hail Mary and Salve Regina** form a **Marian shield**, reinforcing our dependence on the Mother of God.
  - The invocation of the **Sacred Heart** roots the whole prayer sequence in the **Divine Mercy and love of Jesus**, which is the heart of our faith.
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## □ How to Apply These Prayers Today

- **Pray them after Mass**, especially if attending the Traditional Latin Mass, where they are often recited.
- Use them **as a daily spiritual protection**, especially the **Prayer to St. Michael** in moments of temptation, anxiety, or fear.
- Invoke the **Sacred Heart** when overwhelmed by sin or despair.
- Teach these prayers to children and family members as a **simple spiritual armor**.
- In times of darkness in the Church or the world, unite with these **heavenly intercessors**.

□ *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

— *Ephesians 6:10-11*