

Saints, Sacraments & Sin

— April —

We long to see God raise up disciples in Italy who multiply; making disciples who make disciples.

~Below you will find a suggested amount of time for each segment of your meeting, but don't feel bound by these suggestions. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead your prayer time together.

10 Minutes- Mix and Mingle

Use this time to catch up and get settled before your time of prayer.

10 Minutes- Praise

Before taking time to intercede, praise God for who He is and how He has recently shown Himself to you.

Speak His names out loud (God, You are Savior, You are King, etc.), and His character (God, Your love is unconditional, You are always present).

Praise God for the ways He has been working in and through You. (God, thank You for providing for my family, Thank You for giving me patience yesterday, etc.)

10 Minutes- Personal Surrender and Confession

Personal Surrender

Before interceding on behalf of the people of Italy, surrender the worries of your life that may distract you during this prayer time. Take a moment to write down on a piece of paper any concerns that are on your mind. Is it your finances? Is it a relationship? Jot that down. Then in your heart, give these concerns over to the Lord.

Confession

Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any disbelief or sin that you have been giving in to. Take a moment in your heart to confess these to the Lord and receive His grace and forgiveness.

*15 Minutes- Prayer through the Word

Theme - Saints, Sacraments & Sin

This month we are asking God to reveal Himself to Italians in ways that show that Jesus alone is their mediator, their Redeemer and their King.

Romans 10:1-3

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Prayer Points for Italy

- God, please give believers in Italy our heart's desire -- to know You and be saved.
- God, we ask You to embolden believers in Italy to boldly share Your righteousness with others.
- God, there are Italians zealous to worship You. Open their eyes to Your truth, grace, and righteousness through Jesus.

Acts 2:16-18

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Prayer Points for Italy

- God, as Italians seek out saints or sacraments for their righteousness, give them visions and dreams revealing who You really are.
- God, we ask You to pour Your Spirit into believers in Italy - raise up prophets to proclaim Your truth.
- God, we ask You to bring whole families to Yourself.

*15 Minutes- Intercession for Italy

Below are some insights on Saints, Sacraments & Sin in Italy

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Saints

Over the years Catholic Popes have recognized more than 10,000 people as Saints, and these Saints have become the "protectors" of animals, motorcycles, teachers, seas, lost items and all sorts of things. Italians venerate them and ask them for help with life's challenges. Some Saints are more powerful and more helpful than others. At the top of the list is Mary herself, the "Mother of God", "Co-Redeemer", "Co-Mediator", and the "Queen of Heaven", as she is called by the Catholic Church. Most Italians would never say that they worship anyone other than God or Jesus, but when it comes to their daily practices, Mary and the Saints are the most cited and most sought out.

Sacraments

Since the establishment of the Catholic Church in Italy, religious traditions and rituals have been taught as having power to acquire from God grace and forgiveness. These traditions and rituals have come to be called sacraments. The Catholic Church has seven, such as: Infant Baptism, Eucharist (Jesus' body and blood physically eaten), Confirmation (confirming faith, infant baptism and one's place in the Church). The Catholic Church sustains that salvation is achieved by Christ's work on the cross and by participating in the sacraments of the Catholic Church. Without the Sacraments and the work of the Catholic Church, one cannot be saved.

Sin

Since the late 4th century the Catholic Church in Italy, has made a distinction between sin. There are mortal sins that separate us from God, and there are venial sins that only injure our relationship with God. Mortal sins must be dealt with through confession, penance and reconciliation, which must be done by a priest. Usually, the person must do some acts of reparation to wipe out those sins. Venial sins don't have to be confessed, but confession is encouraged. Since most Italians don't commit "mortal" sins, they tend to see themselves as good people who God will love even if they don't necessarily repent and follow Jesus.

10 Minutes- Listening Prayer

On a blank piece of paper, ask the Lord the following questions. Be still and listen. Write down any words or thoughts that come to mind.

- God, what are Your desires for the Italian people?
- God, how can I pray specifically for Italians to know the truth?

After jotting down these thoughts, share them with a partner or your group. Now spend time praying to God for the things He has put on your heart.

5 Minutes- Closing

We want to hear from you. Take a moment to debrief your prayer time. Are there themes, thoughts or passages that God has laid on your heart for the people of Italy? Take a moment to write these down as a group and give them to your small group facilitator. (Small group facilitator- please email these to your contact person in Italy.)

**NOTE: To use this guide for 30 minutes of prayer versus 60, focus your time on the two, 15 minute sections.*