

Celtic Prayers for Traveling

Why is this faith practice important?

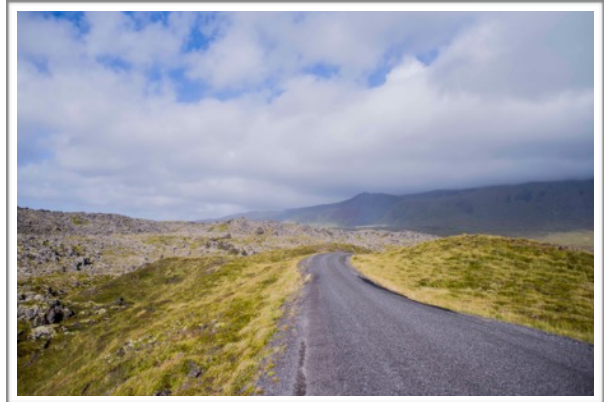
The ancient Celts knew something about sitting still, and they knew about comings and goings. Asking God to bless our travel is important because it helps affirm the purpose of our journey, and our hope that the journey will be a good one.

Travels may be long or short; distant, or just around the block. The Celtic tradition had a way of praying for even the smallest or seemingly mundane human experiences.

Alexander Carmichael, a 19th century author and folklorist, wrote of coming upon a home in rural Scotland. His experience reveals the presence of blessings in everyday life:

“Hail to the house and household,” said I, greeting the inmates in the salutation of our fathers.

“Hail to you, kindly stranger,” replied the housewife. “Come forward and take this seat. ... May the Possessor keep you in His own keeping, good man! You left early and have traveled far, and must be hungry.”



What materials are needed for this practice?

No items are needed, but our most valuable resource – time – is a necessity. To pray before and during travel means setting aside a moment to ask God’s blessing. It means being intentional and making room for God amidst the preparations and flurry of travel.

How to do it

Offer a blessing: Use the Celtic prayers on the following page before or during a trip. You can bless yourself, or bless another person.

Help yourself remember: The most difficult part of this is remembering to do it. Consider using concrete objects as reminders – your car keys, the steering wheel, putting on your seatbealt.

Pack a prayer: Print out the next page and place it on your suitcase or on a loved one’s suitcase before a trip. Better yet, pack a copy inside the suitcase.

Resources for this practice

The Journey Blessing

Bless to me, O God.
The earth beneath my foot,
Bless to me, O God,
The path whereon I go;
Bless to me, O God,
The thing of my desire;
Thou Evermore of evermore,
Bless Thou to me my rest.

Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my mind
Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my love;
Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my hope;
O thou King of kings;
Bless Thou to me mine eye!

A Blessing

The peace of God be to you,
The peace of Christ be to you,
The peace of the Spirit be to you,
 And to your children,
 To you and to your children.

The Path

God bless the path on which you go
God bless the earth beneath your feet
God bless your destination.

God be a smooth way before you
A guiding star above you
A keen eye behind you
This day, this night, and forever.

God be with you whatever you pass
Jesus be with you whatever you climb
Spirit be with you wherever you stay.

God be with you at each stop and each sea
At each lying down and each rising up
In the trough of the waves, on the crest of
 the billows.
Each step of the journey you take.

A Blessing

May the everlasting Father shield you
East and west wherever you go.

“The Journey Blessing,” the two short blessings are found in *Carmina Gadelica, Hymns and Incantations*, collected by Alexander Carmichael (Floris Books 2006).

“The Path” is found in *Celtic Blessings, Prayers for Everyday Life*, compiled by Ray Simpson (Loyola Press 1999).

About the authors

This practice was compiled by Matthew Kozlowski and Amy Dyer at the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary.