

Call for Papers

Participation through Prayer in the Late Medieval and Early Modern World

Midterm Conference of COST Action CA23143 (**PRAYTICIPATE**)

 NOVA University Lisbon

 3–5 February 2027

Conference Theme

For centuries, prayer has played a central role in shaping worldviews, education, and religious experience, as well as structuring communities and everyday life across Europe. Despite the so-called “religious turn” in the humanities, prayer is still often treated as self-evident or ordinary. This has hindered a deeper historical understanding of this powerful and complex phenomenon in the late medieval and early modern periods.

From a European perspective, this era was formative in shaping both public and personal practices of prayer. Yet the study of prayer remains fragmented across disciplines. Addressing this gap, COST Action **PRAYTICIPATE** aims to develop a shared analytical framework for the study of prayer in Latin Christianity from the late Middle Ages to the early modern period.

This conference approaches **prayer as a participatory, multi-layered practice**—a social and communal act mediated through texts, objects, and sensory experiences that shape imagination, hope, and devotion.

Conference Scope

We invite contributions that examine (Western) Christian prayer in its diverse forms and contexts, particularly focusing on the period before the Council of Trent.

Contributions on prayer in other Christian traditions, especially the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as in other religions (e.g. Judaism and Islam), and in later periods (up to the eighteenth century), are also welcome, insofar as they provide additional insight into late medieval and early modern Western Christian prayer.

We welcome proposals for **20-minute papers (in English)**, as well as **roundtables** and **poster presentations**.

Thematic Areas

1. Material Realities of Prayer

This strand explores the materiality of prayer and the transmission of devotional culture. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Production, copying, transmission, adaptation, and circulation of prayer texts and objects
- Manuscripts, printed materials, and text–image relationships
- Devotional objects (e.g. rosaries, relics, ex-votos) and their uses

- Mobility of objects across regions, communities, and contexts
 - Economic, institutional, and artisanal frameworks of production and distribution
 - Terminology and conceptualisations of prayer across sources and disciplines
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2. Social Realities and Networks of Prayer

This strand focuses on the social dynamics and networks shaping prayer practices. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

a. Places, communities and practices of prayer

- Religious communities (monasteries, nunneries, friaries, confraternities, etc.), professional communities (e.g. guilds), and regions (towns, dioceses, states, etc.) and their practices
- Devotional practices at specific churches, shrines, and pilgrimage sites
- Material objects (icons, ampullae, amulets) in their social circulation
- Prayers transmitted and/or explained in sermons or other texts of instruction

b. Encounters with “other” prayer cultures: practice, language, and faith

- Prayer practices in different religious traditions
 - Movement of texts and objects across interfaith boundaries
 - Prayer and vernacular bilingualism
 - Prayer and heresy
 - Prayer and reform movements
 - Controversies surrounding prayer
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3. Immersive Realities of Prayer

This strand investigates the experiential and sensory dimensions of prayer. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

a. Theories of Prayer

- Philosophical and theological foundations
- Relationships between theory and practice (orthodoxy vs. orthopraxy)

b. Poetics of Prayer

- Literary, rhetorical, and visual conventions of prayer
- Structures, metaphors, iconography, and their evolution
- Effects of transmission, translation, and media in shaping devotional experience

c. Performativity

- Ritual, gesture, posture, and movement
- Staged aspect of prayer, liturgical drama, devotional theatre, and meditative practices
- Representations of prayer in visual and literary media

d. Sensory and Multimodal Experiences

- Sensory practices and experiences in pilgrimage, urban, monastic, and individual contexts
- Embodiment and material environments (books, objects, architecture)
- Inclusion and diversity (e.g. blind or sensory-diverse practitioners)

We warmly invite scholars from a wide range of disciplines to contribute to this interdisciplinary exploration of prayer as a lived, material, and experiential practice.

Submission Guidelines

Please submit:

- **Title and abstract** (max. 200 words)
- **Short biography** (max. 100 words)

 Submission to: Prof. Dr. Jonathan Reinert (jonathan.reinert@th-reutlingen.de)

 **Deadline:** 15 August 2026

 **Notification of acceptance:** 15 September 2026

Publication

A selection of revised contributions will be considered for publication (subject to double peer review) in an edited volume in an academic book series (details forthcoming).

Funding

Participation in person will be supported by the COST Action, including:

- Daily allowance
- Reimbursement of travel expenses