



Sharing food is the most universal cultural experience, connecting people to one another, to nature, and to the infinite. Expressing thanks for food was the world's first act of worship and is common to every known society. Saying grace before meals is a wonderful family tradition to observe, as it acknowledges bounty and our daily sustenance as gifts from the divine. This small selection of blessings offers a delightful way to enrich any mealtime gathering.

O Lord, that lends me life,  
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.  
—William Shakespeare (1564–1616)



Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.  
—Birkat Hazan (prayer from the Torah recited before eating bread)

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.  
I adorn all the earth.  
I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.  
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.  
I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.  
I am the rain coming from the dew  
That causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.  
I am the yearning for good.  
—Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

This food comes from the Earth and the Sky,  
It is the gift of the entire universe  
and the fruit of much hard work;  
I vow to live a life which is worthy to receive it.  
—Grace of the Bodhisattva Buddhists

Bless our hearts  
to hear in the  
breaking of bread  
the song of the universe.  
—Father John Giuliani (b. 1932)



From the sky you send rain on the hills,  
and the earth is filled with your blessings.  
You make the grass grow for the cattle  
and plants for man to use  
so that he can grow his crops  
and produce wine to make him happy,  
olive oil to make him cheerful,  
and bread to give him strength.  
—Psalms 104:13–15, Hebrew Bible

God, we thank you for all your gifts.  
This day, this night,  
These fruits, these flowers,  
These trees, these waters—  
With all these treasures you have endowed us.  
The heat of the sun, the light of the moon,  
The songs of the birds and the coolness of the breeze,  
The green, green grass like a mattress of velvet,  
All owe their existence to your grace.  
—Pakistani prayer

So often bread is taken for granted,  
Yet there is so much beauty in bread—  
Beauty of the sun and the soil,  
Beauty of human toil.  
Winds and rains have caressed it,  
Christ, Himself, blessed it.  
—Christian prayer



Nicely, nicely, nicely, away in the East,  
the rain clouds care for little corn plants  
as a mother cares for her baby.  
—Zuni Indian corn ceremony



Heavenly Father  
Bless this food  
Make it holy  
Let no impurity or greed defile it  
The food comes from thee  
It is for Thy temple  
Spiritualize it  
We are the petals of thy manifestation  
But thou art the flower  
Its life, beauty, and loveliness  
Permeate our souls with the fragrance of thy presence  
OM—peace—amen.  
—Hindu prayer

Excerpted with permission from *Bless This Food*  
(© 2007 New World Library), edited by Adrian  
Butash. Compiled by Carrie Grossman.