

Prayer 101.1 // St. Mary Parish // Selected quotes

Carthusians Former Superior General Dom Andre:

“Prayer is precisely our most personal and secret work. It is our very own, and cannot be taught in a nameless manner” (I, p9).

Carthusians’ three preliminaries to prayer:

- Humility – the “gate of prayer”
 - Acceptance of our own poverty
 - “Our boundless poverty... our endless need of being taken up into Him”
- Purity of Heart
- Assimilation of the Word of God (cf. Ibid.)

“Prayer springs from a divine initiative, to which we should be attentive, in order to perceive it and to allow ourselves to be borne by it” (Dom Andre, I, 28).

Psalm 63: Oh God, you are my God, for you I long, for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water. And so I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.

St. Teresa of Avila:

- “Prayer... is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us” (Teresa of Avila, Life 8.5).
- “We need no wings to go in search of God, but have only to find a place where we can be alone and look upon Him present within us.”

Jesus: “when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (Matthew 6:6).

Silence and purity of heart

“Whoever multiplies words, even though he recounts what is admirable, knows that he is empty within... Silence, like a sun, will enlighten you in God and will free you from the illusions of spiritual ignorance. Silence will unite you to God Himself” (Isaac of Nineveh, quoted by Dom Andre, I, 40).

“In the early stages of our Carthusian life we may find silence a burden; however, if we are faithful, there will gradually be born within us of our silence itself something that will draw us on to still greater silence.” (Carthusian Statutes)

“If we allow our prayer to be permeated by a tranquil repose, this will in turn bring us, as if by its own weight, to the profound silence where God awaits us... This is our destination: a prayer that is itself silence; not speculation about silence, but precisely the cessation of all thought, so that our heart may be free from thought and no longer filled with anything but God” (Dom Andre, II, 16).

“This purity of heart can only exist at the moment of prayer if we have sought it all our life long. There is a strict connection between my heart at the moment of prayer, and what it is during the other activities of my day. The quality of prayer, its capacity to penetrate the heart of God, comes from the way I know how to keep my heart alert, and to hold it always oriented toward its end during all the lesser activities, which are less recollected.” (Dom Andre, p.17)

Carmelite Marie-Aimee de Jesus: “The first indispensable step toward Divine union requires a practice of speaking less to the created and much more to the Creator... Not listening to the world and its news allows space to be silent with God, to listen only to God’s voice and the voices of the holiest of souls. It is to be as silent as Mary, who was able to hear the voice of the angel” (*The Twelve Degrees of Silence*, p.40).

“Interior recollection can only be acquired through the imposition of harsh restrictions in the matter of what comes to us from the outside, whether news of current events or books giving us the latest slants. It is all too easy to say ‘I don’t find this a hindrance; I can assimilate it without it harming my prayer.’ In fact, however, the transparency called for in a heart entirely surrendered to God is incomparably more demanding” (Dom Andre, II, 15).

The “work” of being silent

- St. Augustine: *Nil laboriosius quam non laborare* (there is no harder work than not working)
- “There is nothing so difficult as to leave our need for activity without any apparent outlet” (Dom Andre, II, 15).

Solitude

Hosea 2:14 “Therefore I will allure her. I will lead her into the desert, and there speak to her heart.”

- a. Solitude is, “a foretaste of that final meeting with God” (Dom Andre, II, 9).
- b. “God Himself is the center of our solitude: before speaking to us of love, He speaks to us of the desert. If we do not hearken to His voice when He calls, He will never speak to our heart” (Dom Andre, II, 13).