

# FAITH AND REASON

**Prayer is the first strength of hope:** Let us continue the catechesis on prayer, by meditating on the mystery of Creation. Life, the simple fact that we exist, opens mankind's heart to prayer.

The first page of the Bible resembles a great hymn of thanksgiving. The narrative of Creation has a rhythm with refrains, where the goodness and beauty of every living thing is continually emphasized. With his word, God calls to life, and everything comes into existence. With his word, he separates life from darkness, alternates day and night, interchanges the seasons, opens a palette of colors with the variety of plants and animals. In this overflowing forest that quickly vanquishes the chaos, the last one to appear is man. And this appearance inspires an extreme exultation that amplifies his satisfaction and joy: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was good". Very good, but also beautiful: the beauty of all creation can be seen! The beauty and mystery of Creation create in the human heart the first impulse that evokes prayer. The eighth Psalm which we heard earlier states: "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?". The one praying contemplates the mystery of the life around him; he sees the starry sky that lies above him and that astrophysics shows us today in all its immensity and asks himself what loving plan must there be behind such ponderous work! And, in this boundless expanse, what is man? 'Almost nothing', another Psalm states: a being that is born, a being that dies, an extremely fragile creature. Yet, in all the universe, the human being is the only creature aware of the great profusion of beauty. A small being who is born, who dies; he is here today and gone tomorrow. He is the only one who is aware of this beauty. We are aware of this beauty!

Mankind's prayer is closely linked to the sentiment of wonder. The greatness of man is infinitesimal when compared to the dimensions of the universe. His greatest conquests seem quite small... However, man is not nothing. In prayer a sentiment of mercy is powerfully confirmed. Nothing exists by chance: the secret of the universe lies in a benevolent gaze that someone meets in our eyes. The Psalm states that we are made little less than God; we are crowned with glory and honor. The relationship with God is man's greatness, his enthronement. By nature, we are almost nothing, small, but by vocation, by calling, we are the children of the great King!

It is an experience that many of us have had. If life's events, with all their bitterness, sometimes risk choking the gift of prayer that is within us, it is enough to contemplate a starry sky, a sunset, a flower... in order to rekindle a spark of thanksgiving. This experience is perhaps the basis of the first page of the Bible.

The people of Israel were not experiencing happy days when the great biblical narrative of Creation was written. An enemy power had occupied their land; many had been deported, and they now found themselves slaves in Mesopotamia. There was no more homeland, nor temple, nor social and religious life, nothing.

Yet, precisely in starting from the great narrative of Creation, someone began to find reasons for thanksgiving, to praise God for his or her existence. Prayer is the first strength of hope. You pray and hope grows, it moves forward. I would say that prayer opens the door to hope. There is hope but I open the door with my prayer. Because people of prayer safeguard basic truths; they are the ones who repeat, first and foremost to themselves and then to all the others, that this life, despite all its toils and trials, despite its difficult days, is full of a grace that is awe inspiring. And as such it must always be defended and protected....

**Holy Father during the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 20 May 2020**

**From Man to Saint:** The transition from the good man to the Saint is a sort of revolution: by which one for whom all things illustrate and illuminate God becomes for whom God illustrates and illuminates all things. It is rather like the reversal whereby a lover might say at first sight that a lady looked like a flower and say afterwards that all flowers reminded him of his lady. A saint and a poet standing by the same flower might seem to say the same thing; but indeed, though they would both be telling the truth, they would be telling different truths. For one, the joy of life is a cause of faith, for the other a result of faith... The mystic who passes through the moment when there is nothing, but God does in some way behold the beginningless beginnings in which there was really nothing else. He not only appreciates everything, but the nothing of which everything was made. In a fashion he endures and answers even the earthquake irony of the book of Job; in some sense he is there when the foundation of the world are laid, with the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy... **St Francis of Assisi**

**Faith is demanding:** How can we profess faith in God's word, and then refuse to let it inspire and direct our thinking, our activity, our decisions, and our responsibilities toward one another. Faith is demanding and leads us beyond ourselves to action.

**Illnesses of the Spirit:** There is no one who claims that there is no God who is not infected by carnal desire of a lust for earthly power or a delightful madness of some spectacle. They love such temporal things and seek their happiness in them. They pursue the earthly objects of their desire wherever they lead and fear anyone who seems to have the power to take them away...**St Augustine**

**Increase My Faith:** Lord, I believe in you; increase my faith. I trust in you; strengthen my trust. I love you; let me love you more and more. I am sorry for my sins; deepen my sorrow. I worship you as my Creator. I long for you as my last end. I praise you as my constant helper. I call on you as my loving protector. Guide me by your wisdom, correct me with your justice, comfort me with your mercy, protect me with your power...**Pope Clement IX**

#### **A Thought for the Day**

**Sunday** Kindness is the oil that takes friction out of life.  
**Monday** Two marks of a Christian: giving and forgiving.  
**Tuesday** Faith is daring the Soul to go farther than it can see.  
**Wednesday** It takes more courage to repent than to keep on sinning.  
**Thursday** God makes a promise – faith believes it, hope anticipates it, patience quietly awaits it.  
**Friday** To grow tall spiritually, a man must first learn to kneel.  
**Saturday** While virtue is its own reward, most people are looking for a better offer.

**Bearing a Fiend's Burden:** Let us bear each other's burdens in this life so that we can achieve that life that has no burdens. Take the example of deer. When deer swim across a channel to an island in search of pasture, they line themselves up in such a way that the weight of their antlers is borne by another. The one behind, by extending its neck places its head on the one in front. Since the one at the head of the line has no one to support its head, when it tires it gives up its place to the one behind and retreats to the last place in the line. Through this method of bearing one another's burdens they are able to cross the channel to the island. It is an example of the truth that bearing a friend's burden is the best proof of friendship... **St Augustine**

**Jesus is our Joy:** Jesus, joy of loving hearts! Fount of life. Light of men. From the best bliss that earth imparts we turn unfilled to you again. Your truth unchanged has ever stood; you save those who upon you call. To those who seek you, you are good, to those who find you, all in all. We taste you Lord, the living Bread, and long to feast upon you still, we drink of you, the fountainhead, souls thirsty yet to find their fill. Our restless spirit yearns for you, no matter where our lot is cast. Glad when we see your gracious smile; blest when our faith can hold you fast. O Jesus, always with us stay; make all our moments calm and bright. Chase the dark night of sin away; shed on the world your holy light.... **Hymn attributed to St Bernard of Clairvaux.**

**The Foot Path to Peace:** To be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look at the stars, to be satisfied with your possessions but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them, to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness and to fear nothing except cowardice, to be governed by your admirations rather than your disgusts, to covet nothing that is your neighbor's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manners, to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and spirit in God's out-of-doors. These are the little guideposts on the path to peace... **Henry Van Dyke**

**The Cornerstone:** The mystery of the Incarnation has given a tremendous impetus to humanity's thought and artistic genius. Precisely by reflecting on the union of two natures, human and divine, in the Person of the Incarnate Word, Christian thinkers have come to explain the concept of a person and the unique and unrepeatable center of wisdom and responsibility, whose inalienable dignity must be realized, this concept of the person has proved to be the cornerstone for a genuinely human civilization..... **St John Paul II**

**In His Will is Our Peace**  
**Fr. William C. Mooney**

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