

FAITH AND REASON

The persevering prayer: Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning! We continue the catechesis on prayer. Someone said to me: “You talk too much about prayer. It is not necessary”. Yes, it is necessary. Because if we do not pray, we will not have the strength to go forward in life. Prayer is like the oxygen of life. Prayer draws down upon us the presence of the Holy Spirit who always leads us forward. For this reason, I speak a lot about prayer. Jesus gave us the example of continual prayer, practiced with perseverance. Constant dialogue with his Father, in silence and in recollection, was the fulcrum of his entire mission. The Gospels also report his exhortations to the disciples, that they pray insistently, without growing tired. The Catechism recalls three parables contained in the Gospel of Luke that underline this characteristic of Jesus’ prayer.

First of all, prayer must be tenacious: like the character in the parable who, having to welcome a guest who arrived unexpectedly in the middle of the night, goes to knock on the door of a friend and asks him for some bread. The friend responds, “No!”, because he is already in bed — but he insists and insists until he forces his friend to get up and give him some bread. A tenacious request. But God is more patient than we are, and those who knock with faith and perseverance on the door of his heart will not be disappointed. God always responds. Always. Our Father knows well what we need; insistence is necessary not to inform him or to convince him, but rather it is necessary to nurture the desire and expectation in us. The second parable is that of the widow who goes to the judge so that he may help her obtain justice. This judge is corrupt; he is a man without scruples, but in the end, exasperated by the insistence of the widow, he decides to please her... He thought: “But, it is better to resolve this problem and get her off my back rather than she continuously come before me to complain”. This parable makes us understand that faith is not a momentary leap, but a courageous disposition to call on God, even to “argue” with him, without resigning oneself to evil and injustice.

The third parable presents a pharisee and a publican who go to the Temple to pray. The first turns to God boasting of his merits; the other feels unworthy even to enter the sanctuary. God however does not listen to the prayer of the first, that is, of the proud ones, while he does grant the prayer of the humble. There is no true prayer without a spirit of humility. It is precisely humility that leads us to ask in prayer.

The teaching of the Gospel is clear: we need to pray always, even when everything seems in vain, when God appears to be deaf and mute and it seems we are wasting time. Even if heaven is overshadowed, the Christian does not stop praying. A Christian’s prayer keeps stride with his or her faith. And many days of our life, faith seems to be an illusion, a barren struggle. There are moments of darkness in our life, and in those moments, faith seems to be an illusion. But the practice of prayer means accepting this struggle too. “Father, I pray and do not feel anything... I feel like my heart is dry, that my heart is arid”. But we have to continue, with this struggle in the tough moments, the moments in which we feel nothing. Many saints experienced the night of faith and God’s silence — when we knock, and God does not respond — and these saints were persevering. During these nights of faith, those who pray are never alone. Indeed, Jesus is not only a witness and teacher of prayer; he is more. He welcomes us in his prayer so that we might pray in him and through him. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Gospel invites us to pray to the Father in Jesus’ name. Saint John provides these words of the Lord: “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”. And the Catechism explains that “the certitude that our petitions will be heard is founded on the prayer of Jesus”. It gives the wings that the prayer of mankind has always desired to possess.

How can we fail to recall here the words of Psalm 91, laden with trust, springing from a heart that hopes for everything from God: “he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday”. It is in Christ that this stupendous prayer is fulfilled, it is in him that it finds its complete truth. Without Jesus, our prayer risks being reduced to human effort, destined most of the time to failure. But he has taken on himself every cry, every groan, every jubilation, every supplication ... every human prayer. And let us not forget the Holy Spirit who prays in us; it is he who leads us to pray, he leads us to Jesus. He is the gift that the Father and the Son gave us to foster an encounter with God. And the Holy Spirit, when we pray, is the Holy Spirit who prays in our hearts. Christ is everything for us, even in our prayer life. Saint Augustine used to say this with an enlightening expression that we also find in the Catechism: Jesus “prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore, let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us”. This is why the Christian who prays fears nothing, he or she trusts in the Holy Spirit who was given to us as a gift and who prays in us, eliciting prayer. May the Holy Spirit himself, Teacher of prayer, teach us the path of prayer... **Pope Francis**

Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize His voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in His footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive His promise. Help us to be touched by His love, that we may touch Him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to Him and to believe in His love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature. Sow in our faith, the joy of the Risen One. Remind us, that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that He may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day, which is Christ Himself, your Son, our Lord! Amen... **Prayer to Mary**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	Blessed is the man who is too busy to worry in the daytime and to sleep to worry at night.
Monday	It is neither wealth nor splendor, but tranquility and occupation, which gives happiness.
Tuesday	Many people doubt their ability, but few have any misgivings about their importance.
Wednesday	Every action of our lives touches some chords that will vibrate in eternity.
Thursday	Laughter has always seemed to me to be the most civilized music in the universe.
Friday	Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.
Saturday	Leave sadness to the world. We who work for God should be lighthearted.

Lord Jesus, help us to see in your Cross all the crosses of the world:

The cross of those who hunger for bread and for love; The cross of those who are alone or abandoned even by their own children and family members; The cross of those who thirst for justice and peace; The cross of those who do not have the comfort of the faith; The cross of the elderly who are bowed down under the weight of years and loneliness; The cross of migrants who find doors closed because of fear, and hearts sealed by political calculations; The cross of the little ones, wounded in their innocence and purity; The cross of humanity that wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and in the darkness of the culture of the fleeting moment; The cross of families broken by betrayal, by the seductions of the evil one or by murderous lightness and by selfishness; The cross of consecrated persons who tirelessly seek to bring your light into the world and feel rejected and mocked; The cross of consecrated persons who, along the way, have forgotten their first love; The cross of your children who, believing in you and trying to live according to your word, find themselves marginalized and discarded even by their families and their peers; The cross of our weaknesses, our hypocrisies, our betrayals, our sins and our many broken promises; The cross of your Church which, faithful to your Gospel, struggles to carry your love even among the baptized themselves; The cross of the Church, your bride, who feels continually attacked from within and from without; The cross of our common home that withers seriously before our selfish eyes that are blinded by greed and power. Lord Jesus, rekindle in us the hope of the resurrection and of your definitive victory against all evil and all death. **Amen!**

We come to confession quite preoccupied with the shame that we shall feel. We accuse ourselves with hot air. It is said that many confess, and few are converted. I believe it is so, my children because few confess with tears of repentance. See, the misfortune is, that people do not reflect. If one said to those who work on Sundays, to a young person who had been dancing for two or three hours, to a man coming out of an alehouse drunk, "What have you been doing? You have been crucifying Our Lord!" they would be quite astonished because they do not think of it. My children, if we thought of it, we should be seized with horror; it would be impossible for us to do evil. For what has the good God done to us that we should grieve Him thus, and put Him to death again — Him, who has redeemed us from Hell? It would be well if all sinners, when they are going to their guilty pleasures, could, like St Peter, meet Our Lord on the way, who would say to them, "I am going to that place where you are going yourself, to be there crucified again." Perhaps that might make them reflect. — **St John Vianney, the Cure of Ars**

Word of God: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.... **Matthew 5, 10-12**

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

Spiritual Direction and Confession
Email: Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com
Appointments: (904) 824-6625
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