

FAITH AND REASON

The Immense Sea of God's Love: Dear brothers and sisters, good morning! In our journey of catechesis on prayer, today and next week we will see how, thanks to Jesus Christ, prayer opens us up to the Trinity — to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit — to the immense sea of God who is Love. It is Jesus who opened up Heaven to us and projected us into a relationship with God. It was he who did this: he opened up to us this relationship with the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what the Apostle John says at the conclusion of the prologue of his Gospel: “No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known”. Jesus revealed the identity to us, this identity of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We really did not know how to pray: what words, what feelings and what language were appropriate for God. In that request the disciples addressed to the Teacher, which we have often recalled in the course of these catechesis, there is all of humanity's fumbling, repeated attempts, often unsuccessful, to address the Creator: “Lord, teach us to pray”.

Not all prayers are equal, and not all are convenient: the Bible itself attests to the negative outcome of many prayers, which are rejected. Perhaps God at times is not pleased with our prayers and we are not even aware of this. God looks at the hands of those who pray: to make them pure it is not necessary to wash them; if anything, one should refrain from evil acts. Saint Francis prayed: “Nullus homo ène dignu te mentovare”, that is, “no man is worthy to mention Your name”.

But perhaps the most moving acknowledgment of the poverty of our prayer came from the lips of the Roman centurion who one day begged Jesus to heal his sick servant. He felt totally inadequate: he was not a Jew; he was an officer in the detested occupying army. But his concern for his servant emboldens him, and he says: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed”. It is the phrase we also repeat in every Eucharistic liturgy. To dialogue with God is a grace: we are not worthy of it, we have no rights to claim, we “limp” with every word and every thought... But Jesus is the door that opens us to this dialogue with God.

Why should humanity be loved by God? There are no obvious reasons, there is no proportion.... So much so that most mythologies do not contemplate the possibility of a god who cares about human affairs; on the contrary, they are considered bothersome and boring, entirely negligible. Let us remember God's phrase to his people, repeated in Deuteronomy: “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us?” This closeness of God is the revelation! Some philosophers say that God can only think of himself. If anything, it is we humans who try to persuade the deity and be pleasing to his eyes. Hence the duty of “religion”, with the procession of sacrifices and devotions to be offered continuously to ingratiate ourselves with a mute God, an indifferent God. There is no dialogue. It was only Jesus, it was only the revelation of God to Moses before Jesus, when God introduced himself; it was only the Bible that opened us up to the path of dialogue with God. Let us remember: “What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as ours?”; this closeness of God that opens us up to dialogue with him.

A God who loves humanity: we would never have had the courage to believe in him, had we not known Jesus. The knowledge of Jesus made us understand this, it revealed this to us. It is the scandal that we find inscribed in the parable of the merciful father, or in that of the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep. We would not have been able to conceive or even comprehend such stories if we had not encountered Jesus. What God is prepared to die for people? What God loves always and patiently, without demanding to be loved in return? What God accepts the tremendous lack of gratitude of a son who asks for his inheritance in advance and leaves home, squandering everything?

It is Jesus who reveals God's heart. Thus Jesus tells us through his life the extent to which God is Father. *Tam Pater nemo*: No one is Father as he is. The paternity that is closeness, compassion and tenderness. Let us not forget these three words, that are God's style: closeness, compassion and tenderness. It is his way of expressing his paternity towards us. It is difficult for us to imagine from afar the love with which the most Holy Trinity is filled, and the depth of the reciprocal benevolence that exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eastern icons offer us a glimpse of this mystery that is the origin and joy of the whole universe.

Above all, it was beyond us to believe that this divine love would expand, landing on our human shore: we are the recipients of a love that has no equal on earth. The Catechism explains: “The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father”. And this is the grace of our faith. We really could not have hoped for a higher vocation: the humanity of Jesus — God made himself close in Jesus — made available to us the very life of the Trinity; he opened, he threw wide open this door of the mystery of the love of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... **Pope Francis**

O God our Creator, from your provident hand we have received our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You have called us as your people and given us the right and the duty to worship you, the only true God, and your Son, Jesus Christ. Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit, you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the world, bringing the light and the saving truth of the Gospel to every corner of society.

We ask you to bless us in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty. Give us the strength of mind and heart to readily defend our freedoms when they are threatened; give us courage in making our voices heard on behalf of the rights of your Church and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.

Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father, a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters gathered in your Church in this decisive hour in the history of our nation, so that, with every trial withstood and every danger overcome— for the sake of our children, our grandchildren, and all who come after us— this great land will always be “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen... **St. Thomas More**

A Thought for the Day

Sunday	The triumphal song of life would lose its melody without its minor keys.
Monday	The Spirit works, the Son fulfills His ministry, and the Father approves: and then man is brought to full salvation.
Tuesday	Men do not fear a hostile army as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary.
Wednesday	No one can live in doubt when he has prayed in faith.
Thursday	If then, you're looking for the way you should go, take Christ, because he himself is the way.
Friday	Sometimes it's difficult to know who's knocking – opportunity or temptation.
Saturday	When the storms of life batter us, our first reaction should be the same as the Apostles in the boat: go to Jesus and wake him up.

Our Lady of Knock: I come to Thee, my Mother, to lay before Thy feet, my fears, my hopes, my longings, my bitter hours and sweet. O take them Mother Mary, and place them by God's throne, Your hands will give them value, they're worthless on their own. As I kneel before you, speak to your Son for me, though poor and small my offering, I know 'tis dear to thee. For you your Son at Cana, changed water into wine, the needs of bride and bridegroom, were small compared to mine. And so, my Mother Mary, I lay before Thy feet, my fears, my hopes, my longings, my bitter hours and sweat.

The Footpath to Peace: To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions but not content 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 by your disgusts; to covet nothing of 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 with spirit in God's out-of-doors; these are little guideposts on the footpath to peace... **Henry van Dyke**

True humility does not make show of itself and hardly speaks in a humble way. It not only wants to conceal all other virtues but most of all it wants to conceal itself. If it were lawful to lie, dissemble, or scandalize our neighbor, humility would perform arrogant, haughty actions so that it might be concealed beneath them and live completely hidden and unknown... **St Francis De Sales**

Experience tells us that a world without God becomes a “hell”: filled with selfishness, broken families, hatred between individuals and nations, and a great deficit of love, joy and hope. On the other hand, wherever individuals and nations accept God's presence, worship him in truth and listen to his voice, then the civilization of love is being built, a civilization in which the dignity of all is respected, and communion increases, with all its benefits... **Pope Benedict XVI**

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