

FAITH AND REASON

Pope at Audience: Christians called to safeguard God's presence. Pope Francis concludes his catechesis on “prayer as a relationship with the Holy Trinity,” focusing on Wednesday’s General Audience on the work of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis continued his reflections on prayer as a relationship with the Holy Trinity, part of an ongoing series of catechetical lessons on prayer in general. At Wednesday’s General Audience, the Holy Father focused in particular on the role of the Holy Spirit. “The first gift of every Christian existence is the Holy Spirit,” he said. The Holy Spirit opens our hearts to Christ, and allows us to invoke God as “Abba,” that is, “Father.”

Making Jesus present: Citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis noted that it is the Holy Spirit, “by His prevenient grace,” that draws us to pray to Jesus. At the same time, the Church reminds us that we must pray to the Holy Spirit as well, encouraging us to address our prayer to Him “every day, especially at the beginning and end of every important action.” The work of the Holy Spirit, the Pope continued, is to “remind us” of Jesus, to make Him present in the lives of Christians of every time and place. Because of the Spirit, Jesus is not distant, but with us always: “He still educates His disciples by transforming their hearts.”

Keeping the flame alive: This, said Pope Francis, “is the experience of so many who pray, men and women whom the Holy Spirit has formed according to the ‘measure’ of Christ, in mercy, service, prayer.” It is the experience not only of monks and hermits, but of ordinary people who “have woven a long history of dialogue with God.” Seeking God, the Pope said, “they safeguard His presence” – in the Gospel, in the Eucharist, and in the faces of those in need – “like a secret flame.” Pope Francis said that keeping this flame of God’s presence alive is “the first task of Christians,” a task symbolized by the lighted lamps that burn night and day before the Eucharist present in the tabernacles of Catholic churches.

The Master of Christian prayer: Finally, and again quoting the Catechism, Pope Francis said the Holy Spirit is the “interior Master of Christian prayer... the artisan of the living tradition of prayer.” It is the Spirit Who inspires “the many paths of prayer,” which are as unique and varied as the individual people who pray.

“In the endless field of holiness,” Pope Francis said in conclusion, “the one God, the Trinity of Love, allows the variety of witnesses to flourish: all are equal in dignity, but also unique in the beauty that the Spirit has willed to be expressed in each of those whom God’s mercy has made His children.”

The Scourging of Christ: Historians and Biblical scholars have tried to reconstruct the detail, of the appalling laceration of body and spirit, from the sources. The scourging is the subject of much devotion in Poland, where many hymns written around it are sung in the course of the special Lenten liturgy of compassion for the Lord, known in Poland as “the repentance of grief”. “Oh my Jesus how cruelly you were bound to the pillar; scourged for your great faults” ... And then in the second part; “For my wickedness the Lord's back is being scourged. Come, you sinners, see for you is being prepared in the blood of Jesus, a spring of living water to quench the heart's thirst”.

Then in the third part of the liturgy, as though it were a lamentation by Our Lady of Sorrows, Polish devotion has her to say: “Ah, I see my Son, stripped naked against the pillar, scourged with whips”. The simple words and the gentle melodies, both dating from the eighteenth century express very poignantly the sentiments in the hearts of the faithful.

The dominant feature of this devotion is its awareness of the close link between the atrocious torture inflicted on Christ's body and mankind's sins of the flesh. The potency of the mystery of the scourging seen in that light is truly remarkable. For many people the scourging of Our Lord became the decisive reason for the determination to break the bonds of sin, the reason for mortifying the sinfulness of the flesh, for turning their desires toward the noble and the holy... **St John Paul II**

Hymn to St Brigid (Far above enthroned in glory): Far above enthroned in glory sweetest Saint of Erin’s Isle. See thy children kneel before thee. Turn on us a Mother’s smile. Sancta Mater hear our pleading. Faith and hope and holy love. Sweet St Brigid, spouse of Jesus, sent to us from Heaven above. Sweet St Brigid, Erin’s children, far and near o’er land and sea. In the world and in the cloister, fondly turn with love to thee. Sancta Mater, sooth the mourner, shield the weary tempted soul. Sweet St Brigid, guide thy children to thy bright and happy home.

Christ on the Cross is our Perfect Model: Whoever seeks to live perfectly need only distain what Christ distained on the Cross. For the Cross exemplifies every virtue. If you seek the example of love, recall: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15). Such a man was Christ on the Cross. And if he gave his life for us, it should not be difficult to bear whatever hardship arise for his sake. If you seek patience, you will find no better example than the Cross.

Great patience is shown in two ways; either in patiently enduring much, or voluntarily enduring what could be avoided. Christ endured much on the Cross, and did so patiently, because when he suffered did not threaten. He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and he did not open his mouth.

Christ's patience on the Cross was great. If you seek an example of humility, look upon the Crucified one. For God humbled himself to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to die. If you seek an example of obedience, follow the one who became obedient to the Father even to death. If you seek an example of despising earthly things, follow the one who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Upon the Cross he was stripped, mocked, spat upon, beaten, crowned with thorns, and given only vinegar to drink. So do not be attached to clothing and riches because they divided his garments among themselves. Nor to honors for he suffered harsh words and scourging. Not to high status, for weaving a crown of thorns, they placed it on his head. Nor in anything delightful, for in his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink ... **St Thomas Aquinas**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.
Monday	Justice without love is not justice. Love without justice is not love.
Tuesday	"Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me."
Wednesday	He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.
Thursday	Loving God, I am just beginning to realize how much you love me.
Friday	Truth has no special time of its own. Its hour is always now.
Saturday	Love is the master key that opens the door to happiness.

Psalm 21:1-12: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me, far from my prayer, from the words of my cry? O my God, I cry out by day, and you answer not; by night, and there is no relief for me. Yet you are enthroned in the holy place, O glory of Israel! In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and they escaped; in you they trusted, and they were not put to shame. But I am a worm, not a man; the scorn of men, despised by the people. All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads: "He relied on the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him." You have been my guide since I was first formed, my security at my mother's breast. To you I was committed at birth, from my mother's womb you are my God. Be not far from me, for I am in distress; be near, for I have no one to help me.

In the Likeness of God: Why is man afraid? We live in an age of gigantic material progress, which is also the age of a denial of God, on a scale previously unknown. Perhaps man is afraid, as a consequence of his denial of God. In the last analysis, he remains alone interiorly alone. Or perhaps he is afraid because man, who makes God die will not find a decisive curb not to kill man too. This decisive curb is in God. The ultimate reason why man should live, respect and protect man's life is in God. The ultimate foundation of man's value and dignity, of the meaning of life, is the fact that he is the image and likeness of God...

St John Paul II

Holy Saturday: Saving God, all creation waits with groaning and longing for the salvation promised to our ancestors and revealed in the resurrection of your Son Jesus. Teach us how to wait for the bursting forth of your saving power when all will be reconciled to you in Christ Jesus. We wait in hope, O God. We wait in the company of all the angels and saints of heaven. Through their intercession may we have the power to say: Holy, Holy, Holy is our God. Amen.

In His Will is Our Peace

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