



# EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER, MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

Using excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

### PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

#### IN BRIEF

2590 *"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene, Defide orth. 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C).*

2591 *God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man.*

2592 *The prayer of Abraham and Jacob is presented as a battle of faith marked by trust in God's faithfulness and by certitude in the victory promised to perseverance.*

2593 *The prayer of Moses responds to the living God's initiative for the salvation of his people. It foreshadows the prayer of intercession of the unique mediator, Christ Jesus.*

2594 *The prayer of the People of God flourished in the shadow of the dwelling place of God's presence on earth, the ark of the covenant and the Temple, under the guidance of their shepherds, especially King David, and of the prophets.*

2595 *The prophets summoned the people to conversion of heart and, while zealously seeking the face of God, like Elijah, they interceded for the people.*

2596 *The Psalms constitute the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament. They present two inseparable qualities: the personal, and the communal. They extend to all dimensions of history, recalling God's promises already fulfilled and looking for the coming of the Messiah.*

2597 *Prayed and fulfilled in Christ, the Psalms are an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church. They are suitable for men of every condition and time.*

## **IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME**

### **IN BRIEF**

2620 *Jesus' filial prayer is the perfect model of prayer in the New Testament. Often done in solitude and in secret, the prayer of Jesus involves a loving adherence to the will of the Father even to the Cross and an absolute confidence in being heard.*

2621 *In his teaching, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray with a purified heart, with lively and persevering faith, with filial boldness. He calls them to vigilance and invites them to present their petitions to God in his name. Jesus Christ himself answers prayers addressed to him.*

2622 *The prayers of the Virgin Mary, in her Fiat and Magnificat, are characterized by the generous offering of her whole being in faith.*

## **IN THE AGE OF THE CHURCH**

### **IN BRIEF**

2644 *The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls to her all that Jesus said also instructs her in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.*

2645 *Because God blesses the human heart, it can in return bless him who is the source of every blessing.*

2646 *Forgiveness, the quest for the Kingdom, and every true need are objects of the prayer of petition.*

2647 *Prayer of intercession consists in asking on behalf of another. It knows no boundaries and extends to one's enemies.*

2648 *Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter for thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one's whole life: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18).*

2649 *Prayer of praise is entirely disinterested and rises to God, lauds him, and gives him glory for his own sake, quite beyond what he has done, but simply because HE IS.*

## **THE TRADITION OF PRAYER**

2650 *Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within "the believing and praying Church,"<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray.*

2651 The tradition of Christian prayer is one of the ways in which the tradition of faith takes shape and grows, especially through the contemplation and study of believers who treasure in their hearts the events and words of the economy of salvation, and through their profound grasp of the spiritual realities they experience.<sup>2</sup>

## Article 1

### AT THE WELLSPRINGS OF PRAYER

2652 The Holy Spirit is the living water "welling up to eternal life"<sup>3</sup> in the heart that prays. It is he who teaches us to accept it at its source: Christ. Indeed in the Christian life there are several wellsprings where Christ awaits us to enable us to drink of the Holy Spirit.

#### The Word of God

2653 The Church "forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.... Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.'"<sup>4</sup>

2654 The spiritual writers, paraphrasing Matthew 7:7, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer "Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation."<sup>5</sup>

#### The Liturgy of the Church

2655 In the sacramental liturgy of the Church, the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit proclaims, makes present, and communicates the mystery of salvation, which is continued in the heart that prays. The spiritual writers sometimes compare the heart to an altar. Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out "in secret,"<sup>6</sup> prayer is always prayer of the Church; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.<sup>7</sup>

#### The theological virtues

2656 One enters into prayer as one enters into liturgy: by the narrow gate of faith. Through the signs of his presence, it is the Face of the Lord that we seek and desire; it is his Word that we want to hear and keep.

2657 The Holy Spirit, who instructs us to celebrate the liturgy in expectation of Christ's return, teaches us - to pray in hope. Conversely, the prayer of the Church and personal prayer nourish hope in us. The psalms especially, with their concrete and varied language, teach us to fix our hope in God: "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry."<sup>8</sup> As St. Paul prayed: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."<sup>9</sup>

2658 "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."<sup>10</sup> Prayer, formed by the liturgical life, draws everything into the love by which we are loved in Christ and which enables us to respond to him by loving as he has loved us. Love is the source of prayer; whoever draws from it reaches the summit of prayer. In the words of the Cure of Ars:

I love you, O my God, and my only desire is to love you until the last breath of my life. I love you, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving you, than live without loving you. I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally.... My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.<sup>11</sup>

"Today"

2659 We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of each day, to make prayer spring up from us. Jesus' teaching about praying to our Father is in the same vein as his teaching about providence:<sup>12</sup> time is in the Father's hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: "O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts."<sup>13</sup>

2660 Prayer in the events of each day and each moment is one of the secrets of the kingdom revealed to "little children," to the servants of Christ, to the poor of the Beatitudes. It is right and good to pray so that the coming of the kingdom of justice and peace may influence the march of history, but it is just as important to bring the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations; all forms of prayer can be the leaven to which the Lord compares the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

## **IN BRIEF**

*2661 By a living transmission -Tradition - the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray.*

*2662 The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.*

## **Article 2**

### **THE WAY OF PRAYER**

#### **IN BRIEF**

*2680 Prayer is primarily addressed to the Father; it can also be directed toward Jesus, particularly by the invocation of his holy name: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners."*

*2681 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). the Church invites us to invoke the Holy Spirit as the interior Teacher of Christian prayer.*

*2682 Because of Mary's singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done for her, and to entrust supplications and praises to her.*

### **Article 3**

## **GUIDES FOR PRAYER**

### **IN BRIEF**

*2692 In prayer, the pilgrim Church is associated with that of the saints, whose intercession she asks.*

*2693 The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are precious guides for the spiritual life.*

*2694 The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer.*

*2695 Ordained ministers, the consecrated life, catechesis, prayer groups, and "spiritual direction" ensure assistance within the Church in the practice of prayer.*

*2696 The most appropriate places for prayer are personal or family oratories, monasteries, places of pilgrimage, and above all the church, which is the proper place for liturgical prayer for the parish community and the privileged place for Eucharistic adoration.*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE LIFE OF PRAYER**

2697 Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart "We must remember God more often than we draw breath."<sup>1</sup> But we cannot pray "at all times" if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.

2698 The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian's life of prayer.

2699 The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.

## **Article 1**

### **EXPRESSIONS OF PRAYER**

#### **1. Vocal prayer**

2700 Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: "Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls."<sup>2</sup>

2701 Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani.<sup>3</sup>

2702 The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication.

2703 This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due.

2704 Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him "to whom we speak;"<sup>4</sup> Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer.

#### **1. Meditation**

2705 Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the "today" of God is written.

2706 To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

2707 There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first

kinds of soil in the parable of the sower.<sup>5</sup> But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708 Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

### **III. Contemplative Prayer**

2709 What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: "Contemplative prayer [*oracion mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us."<sup>6</sup>

Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves."<sup>7</sup> It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

2710 The choice of the time and duration of the prayer arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart. One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter. One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.

2711 Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we "gather up:" the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to him as an offering to be purified and transformed.

2712 Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more.<sup>8</sup> But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God. Contemplative prayer is the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved Son.

2713 Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts.<sup>9</sup> Contemplative prayer is a communion in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness."

2714 Contemplative prayer is also the pre-eminently intense time of prayer. In it the Father strengthens our inner being with power through his Spirit "that Christ may dwell in (our) hearts through faith" and we may be "grounded in love."<sup>10</sup>

2715 Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. "I look at him and he looks at me": this is what a certain peasant of Ars used to say to his holy cure about his prayer before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Thus it learns the "interior knowledge of our Lord," the more to love him and follow him.<sup>11</sup>

2716 Contemplative prayer is hearing the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the "Yes" of the Son become servant and the Fiat of God's lowly handmaid.

2717 Contemplative prayer is silence, the "symbol of the world to come"<sup>12</sup> or "silent love."<sup>13</sup> Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the "outer" man, the Father speaks to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus.

2718 Contemplative prayer is a union with the prayer of Christ insofar as it makes us participate in his mystery. the mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer so that our charity will manifest it in our acts.

2719 Contemplative prayer is a communion of love bearing Life for the multitude, to the extent that it consents to abide in the night of faith. the Paschal night of the Resurrection passes through the night of the agony and the tomb - the three intense moments of the Hour of Jesus which his Spirit (and not "the flesh [which] is weak") brings to life in prayer. We must be willing to "keep watch with (him) one hour."<sup>14</sup>

## **IN BRIEF**

*2720 The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year.*

*2721 The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart.*

*2722 Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples.*

*2723 Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own in faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life.*

*2724 Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery.*

## **THE BATTLE OF PRAYER**

## **IN BRIEF**

*2752 Prayer presupposes an effort, a fight against ourselves and the wiles of the Tempter. the battle of prayer is inseparable from the necessary "spiritual battle" to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ: we pray as we live, because we live as we pray.*

*2753 In the battle of prayer we must confront erroneous conceptions of prayer, various currents of thought, and our own experience of failure. We must respond with humility, trust, and perseverance to these temptations which cast doubt on the usefulness or even the possibility of prayer.*

*2754 The principal difficulties in the practice of prayer are distraction and dryness. the remedy lies in faith, conversion, and vigilance of heart.*

*2755 Two frequent temptations threaten prayer: lack of faith and acedia - a form of depression stemming from lax ascetical practice that leads to discouragement.*

*2756 Filial trust is put to the test when we feel that our prayer is not always heard. the Gospel invites us to ask ourselves about the conformity of our prayer to the desire of the Spirit.*

*2757 "Pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17). It is always possible to pray. It is even a vital necessity. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable.*

*2758 The prayer of the hour of Jesus, rightly called the "priestly prayer" (cf Jn 17), sums up the whole economy of creation and salvation. It fulfills the great petitions of the Our Father.*

*Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2590-2758*

**For more on meditation, prayer, Eucharistic adoration and Eucharistic miracles contact:**

**EUCHARISTIC ADORATION**

**[www.perpetualeucharisticadoration.com](http://www.perpetualeucharisticadoration.com)**

**1-800-784-9550**