

Week Four - Prayer in the Life of the Church

Acts of the Apostles 1:14: “they devoted themselves with one accord to prayer...”

*The Church’s origins are in waiting, expectant praying - literally novena! And this is how the Church is continually renewed. “There is no greater activity than to receive God.”

Praying in the Holy Spirit

“The Holy Spirit, who thus keeps the memory of Christ alive in his Church at prayer, also leads her toward the fullness of truth and inspires new formulations expressing the unfathomable mystery of Christ at work in his Church’s life, sacraments, and mission.” (CCC 2625)

- The Soul’s Delightful Guest (fire, wind, light, and lightness)
- The Pentecost event as a normative way of living fidelity to Jesus in our own time and place
- The animating soul of the Mystical Body of Christ

“All who are guided by the Spirit of God are children of God; for you did not receive a spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear, you received the Spirit of adoption. Whenever we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’, that very Spirit is joining with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God...the Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for while we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit personally joins in with unspoken groans...” (Romans 8:14-16; 26-27)

The Normative Forms of Prayer Revealed in the New Testament

1. Blessing and Adoration

- “The prayer of blessing is man’s response to God’s gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.” (CCC 2626)
- “Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator...adoration is respectful silence in the presence of the ‘ever greater’ God.” (CCC 2628)

2. Prayer of Petition

- “By prayer of petition we express awareness of our relationship with God. We are creatures who are not our own beginning, not the masters of adversity, not our own last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him.” (CCC 2629)
- Expressed in asking, beseeching, pleading, entreating, crying out, asking forgiveness.
- Every need can become the object of petition (turning anxieties into prayer).

3. Prayer of Intercession

- “Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners.” (CCC 2634)
- “Intercession – asking on behalf of another – has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God’s mercy.” (CCC 2635)
- The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries.” (CCC 2636)

4. Prayer of Thanksgiving

- “As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving... ‘Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you’ (1 Thes 5:18).” (CCC 2638)

5. Prayer of Praise

- “Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS.” (CCC 2639)
- “Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the ‘one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom they exist.’” (CCC 2639)

“Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray...one must also learn how to pray.” (CCC 2650)

The Wellsprings of Prayer

“The Holy Spirit is the living water ‘welling up to eternal life’ (John 4:14) 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.” (CCC 2652)

1. The Word of God

- **Lectio Divina* – prayerful pondering of Sacred Scripture with a sensitive heart.
- *Experience of being anchored, sheltered, and carried by the living Word of God.

2. The Liturgy of the Church

- *Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy before, during, and after its celebration.

3. The Theological Virtues

- *We enter prayer by the narrow gate of faith, by praying hope is nourished because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

4. “Today”

- *It is in the present that we encounter God, not yesterday or tomorrow, but today. The events of each day can speak to us of Him, His loving touches, the in-breaking of His tender compassion.
- **The Examen Prayer (Petition - Gratitude / Review – Forgiveness – Renewal)*

Practical Point for Praying this Week

- *Commit to experimenting this week with either *Lectio Divina* or the *Examen Prayer*!