

Week Six - The Prayer of Jesus During His Passion

Prayer: John 15 (“Abide in me”)

“The first task in life is prayer...prayer of the heart: to look at the Lord, to listen to the Lord, to ask the Lord.” (Pope Francis)

“Prayer is not an accessory or ‘optional’, but a question of life and death. In fact, only those who pray – in other words, who entrust themselves to God with filial love – can enter eternal life, which is God himself.” (Pope Benedict XVI)

“It would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today’s world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but ‘Christians at risk’. They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of ‘substitutes’, accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions. It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning.” (Saint John Paul II)

“The Hour” – the long-awaited hour toward which Jesus’s entire mission was directed is the hour of his death...and simultaneously the hour in which God’s glory is to be supremely revealed. 17 times the Gospel of John mentions the “hour” of Jesus. In the first half of the book, the hour is a highly anticipated moment in the ministry of Jesus that constantly grabs the attention of the reader and drives the narrative forward. In the second half of the book, readers discover that Jesus comes upon his “hour” in the final days of His life. (Jn 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1)

Jesus is the model of how to pray. In the upper room, in the garden, and on the hill called Calvary, it is as if we were eavesdropping on the very personal prayer of Jesus.

The Prayer in the Upper Room

-Context of John 17 (“the priestly prayer of Jesus”): the conclusion of five chapters that recount the Last Supper in John’s Gospel. It is his most intimate sharing with his disciples. Immediately before leaving the upper room for Gethsemane, Jesus prays for himself, for his disciples, and for those who will follow Him – for you and for me. In Jesus, we have a high priest, as a representative of all humanity, presenting these prayers of petition and intercession to His Father.

- 1) Jesus prayed for Himself as he faced the Cross (John 17:1-5): *“Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.”*
 - *He asks the Father to crown the work that He undertook at the Father’s command.
 - *Eternal life = to know the Father and the One whom He has sent.
- 2) Jesus prayed for his disciples (John 17:6-19): *“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours.”*
 - *He asks the Father to protect his disciples, as He will no longer be with them.
 - *He prays that they may share the joy that he and Father share.
 - *He asks the Father to keep them from the evil one.
 - *He prays that his disciples may be consecrated in the truth.

- 3) Jesus prayed for all believers yet to come (John 17:20-23): *“I pray not only for them [his disciples], but also for those who will believe in me through their word.”*
*“They are your gift to me!”
*He pleads that we may be united.

-From this prayer, Jesus was to go straight to his betrayal, trial, and ultimately the cross. He would not speak to his disciples again until the cross. In a real sense, his prayer was not one of despair, but a prayer of glory. “And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, ***that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.***”

The Prayer in the Garden

- 1) The intensity of his praying in the Garden of Gethsemane: he is prostrate, his sweat became blood, the three times speak to the urgency of this prayer.
- 2) The confrontation between two wills.
- 3) His desire for company.

The Prayers from the Cross

1. *“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”*
 - Seven times seventy! Without divine mercy we are lost...distressed in nurtured hurts!
2. *“Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*
 - I have come to seek and save what was lost...The thief who stole heaven!
3. *“Woman, behold your son...Behold your mother.”*
 - Receiving the gift of Mary from Jesus and learning to take her into our home.
4. *“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”*
 - The cry of extreme anguish is at the same time the certainty of an answer from God.
5. *“I thirst.”*
 - Both physical thirst and spiritual thirst...give me a drink!
6. *“It is finished.”*
 - It is consummated – atonement and the wedding of reconciliation between God and man.
7. *“Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.”*
 - Trust is always possible. Entrustment as a way of life.
8. A loud, inarticulate cry (the 8th word?)
 - *“Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear...”* (Hebrews 5:7-9)