

OUR LADY TEACHES US TO PRAY IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

by

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There are entire libraries full of books on prayer, as well as numerous writings by the Saints and great teachers of spirituality. Therefore, I would be very naïve if I expected to write another treatise on prayer. In this Meditation I would like to meditate on Our Lady's prayer, through Sacred Scripture and the messages, so that we too may learn how to pray. The book of the messages contains the word "Prayer" 979 times. This alone should encourage us to blindly obey Our Heavenly Mother.

We could say that **Our Lady speaks to us about prayer** in almost every page of the blue book: "Pray, pray, pray, O you souls chosen by me and prepared so maternally by me. Above all, you, my priests: forsake vain and superfluous things. These are times of emergency; you must live only with me, in me, for me." (1/12/'73) "I want you with me in prayer. These present moments are so important and grave that they demand much, very much prayer on the part of my priests. The prayer of my priests is necessary for the salvation of the world." (20/5/'74)

(2/2/86) "It is the Will of God that you give an important place to the life of prayer and of deep union with Him. For this reason, I am leading you to a scrupulous observance of your practices of piety: the Divine Office must never be neglected by you; your daily meditation must be made with calm and love; the Rosary must be recited every day by you, with me; Holy Mass, celebrated and lived by you, must be the point of reference of your entire day."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church devotes all of the fourth part to prayer. A few years ago, always quoting the Messages, during a Meditation I spoke about Contemplative prayer. In another Meditation I spoke about Our Lady and the Holy Spirit. These two mediations are also a little help for prayer.

In the Holy Spirit

Almost all the prayers Our Lady suggests to us are addressed to the Holy Spirit! "Come Holy Spirit, come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well-beloved Spouse" (7/6/81).

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Father Gobbi always began the Cenacles, and therefore the Holy Rosary, with this prayer dictated by Our Lady herself. She

gave us another two beautiful prayers to the Holy Spirit: see 22/5/83 – 26/5/85.

At Pentecost of '94 She gives us this short prayer: Come, Holy Spirit. Come by means of the powerful intercession of my Immaculate Heart... (and then:) Come Holy Spirit. Come at the voice of your well-beloved Spouse who calls You" (22/5/94).

The Christian's prayer is above all commemorating Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus is the only commemoration which the Church makes in the Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving. In this prayer it addresses the Father in the presence of the Holy Spirit, who has the task of "reminding us of Christ's words" (Jn 14:26) and of inspiring the same prayer, as St. Paul teaches us (Rm 8:26). It is therefore the Holy Spirit who awakens in the Church and in Christians the desire for Prayer, according to the very sentiments of Jesus, as St. Paul teaches us once more (Phil 2:5).

During the Mass of February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, I asked the children and parents of Catechism: "Did you come to Church because you were forced by the Parish's program to receive your First Communion and Confirmation or did you come inspired by the Holy Spirit as the Old Simeon did? But if you are also inspired by the Holy Spirit, then why don't you come back after First Communion and Confirmation to encounter Jesus in Sunday Mass? So it is obvious that too many times our prayer does not coincide with that of the Holy Spirit.

Mary was the model of authentic prayer

Our Lady's prayer was always in accordance with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Even our prayer, therefore, must always begin from the same biblical model of Our Lady's prayer, because she was the true imitator of Christ.

The spirit of our prayer must also be moulded by the personal piety of Our Lady, that is, by the way she expresses herself with God.

The Most Blessed Virgin certainly participated in the Liturgy of the Synagogue and the festivities of the year with all the availability of a most pure soul, preserved from all original sin, and therefore completely open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

If we want to live out our Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, **we must walk together with Her**, trying to imitate her intimacy with God, that is, her prayer. Let us begin with the Annunciation:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your Word. (Lk 1:38).

This was the attitude of the soul in prayer throughout her whole life: obedience to the Word of God, humility, continuous adoration of the Lord and the power of Faith even in the most tragic moments of the life of Her Son and afterwards of the early Church. In order for us to live out our consecration to her Immaculate Heart too, she suggested this prayer to us: "Mother, I trust in you, I let myself be led by you. Tell me: what must I do?" (21/7/73). With this prayer She teaches us to always say yes together with her first yes. Certainly the Annunciation marked the turning point of her prayer experience. She became the living temple of the Incarnate Word and the collaborator of the Holy Spirit.

An author says: "Now She turns to the Lord with a relationship of humility and intimacy, knowing that she is collaborating in the generation of the incarnate Son of God. The depth of Mary's prayer is inconceivable; she is a sharer in the circle of love which from Her rises to the Father by means of the Holy Spirit, towards whom she feels a mysterious attraction as the co-creator of her maternity: She lives and speaks with God in his Trinitarian reality just as she converses with her family" (E. Lodi).

Mary's response to the Angel: "May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), already points out the attitude of prayer which is an example for the Church: the docile submission to the will of God, yet lived out by the Virgin Mary in a filial and maternal familiarity.

(8/12/84): "This is the road which today I want to point out to you also, for you to journey along, if you wish to follow your heavenly Mother in her plan of immaculate purity and sanctity.

The Will of God:... When discouragement takes hold of you, the bond with Him which is established in prayer and especially in the Eucharist will give you strength and infuse you with new energy for good. When aridity threatens you, communion with Him will open you up to new and profound experiences of love and joy. Then you too will carry out the divine Will, which is that of living to know, love and serve the Father, in a profound intimacy of life with the Son, whose mystery will become ever increasingly revealed to you in its fullness by the Holy Spirit."

The Magnificat was an external explosion of the secret sentiments of the prayer of Her Heart. May every sentence teach us about prayer.

Don Stefano quoted the writings of Don Dolindo several times. I will now quote one of the meditations he gave to his spiritual daughters, in order to help them to imitate the prayer of Our Lady herself (written in 1921)

"Magnificat anima mea Domunum": Without this profound gratitude we underestimate the gift of God in us and we cannot draw it to others as well.

We must have full confidence in God, rejoicing in Him as children, while we say: "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." In other words, in our prayer we must consider ourselves as nothing, because we have all been ungrateful for God's gift. This interior annihilation will fill us with God's grace and will make us preach with our interior lives the great beatitude of those who possess God. Our Lady said: "for he has looked with favour on his humble servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed." Don Dolindo would also say to us who belong to the MMP, "Don't think that it's easy to possess Jesus as you have possessed him. Humanity flees from such complete intimacy, because it is very materialistic and it doesn't know Jesus' love. You must show within yourselves the beauty of God's gift and with your life more than your words you must preach the greatness of Jesus in you: "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name."

This great mercy which for years has nourished you with Him, has moulded you in Him and has made you guard Him like a treasure, must now spread onto the souls who fear Him, that is, who cherish Him: "He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation." Do not fear: this great mercy will spread and then the power of human pride, the illusion of human strength and wealth will fall...this road made of pride and vanity will waste away and the humble will be lifted up and the hungry will be filled."

St. John Paul II said that Our Lady was the first Tabernacle: She speaks to us of her prayer of contemplation – almost Eucharistic – which accompanied her throughout the nine months and especially on the eve of Jesus' birth. May her words guide us in our adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament:

(12/24/88) "I want to bring you into the depths of my Immaculate Heart, to share with you also, my little children, the feelings which I experienced, during the hours which preceded the birth of my Son Jesus. My soul was immersed in an ocean of peace and blessedness.

The presence of the Word who, for nine months, had been pulsating in his human body which was formed in my virginal womb, had filled my soul with the light and happiness of all paradise. There the Most Holy Trinity had made its habitual dwelling..."

Especially when we are oppressed by our numerous crosses, let us think about the great example our Mother gives us:

(24/12/76) "I felt the fatigue of the journey, the sharpness of the cold, the uncertainty of the arrival, the insecurity of what might be lying ahead of us. And yet I dwelt, as it were, far from the world and the things of the world, all

absorbed in a continual ecstasy with my Child, Jesus, whom I was about to give you.

My sole support was trust in the Father; the sweet expectation of the Son lulled me; in the Spirit, I was filled only with the fullness of love.” (24/12/83)
“Hence I did not remember the fatigue from the long journey we had completed, nor did I feel discouragement at the refusal to open a door to us; I was drawn by the secluded quiet of the grotto and not troubled by its dreariness and want of everything. Then, suddenly, Paradise bent down on my nothingness, and I entered into a rapture of love and of life with the Heavenly Father; when I realized that I was still on earth, I now had in my arms my God, miraculously become my Son.”

The following message reminds me of another message which Our Mother gave us on September 11th '88 entitled “Love is not loved”, where she complains about the little love towards Jesus in the Eucharist: (24/12/80) “but about the crib there is only the warmth of two human hearts which love, the heart of my most chaste spouse and my virginal motherly Heart. But for the Child who is born, the warmth of this love is enough.”
In another message she suggests some invocations to repeat during Eucharistic Adoration: “Jesus, You are our love; Jesus, You alone are our great friend; Jesus, we love You; Jesus, we are in love with You”.

We should leave some room for silence and an examination of conscience after each invocation.

We should repeat the last invocation she gave us with trepidation: “Jesus, we are in love with You”, and let’s hope we won’t wait until Purgatory to reach this level of spiritual nuptials with Jesus before entering into Paradise.

In the same message she said: “If you knew how the Eucharistic Jesus loves you, how a little gesture of your love fills Him with joy and consolation!” And a little later she says: “Make of Jesus your dearest friend, the most trusted person, the most desired and the most loved. Tell your love to Jesus; repeat it often because this is the one thing that makes Him immensely happy, that consoles Him for all the ingratitude, that compensates Him for all the betrayals”.

Lastly, we also quote the message of December 24th 1997:

“Feel with me the intense desire to cover Him with every kind of gratitude; warm Him with the kiss of your priestly love; clothe Him with the white garments of your virtues; wipe away his tears with the precious linen of your immolation; adore Him together with the shepherds, with the purity of your prayer; clasp Him to your heart as your only and greatest treasure.”

Prayer in the journey of Faith

Vatican II (LG58) defines the journey of Faith which Mary made as a constant pilgrimage: it begins with an act of Faith (your will be done) and it continues for the rest of her life. She is among those who listen to Jesus, among those who He has beatified for being faithful to his Word (Mt 3:35; Lk 11:27-28). She is constantly on a journey too, just as an example of our prayer. In the Magnificat Mary's prayer reaches the summit as a prayer of praise of the "poor", who await their true liberation from God.

Prayer of offering as a true sacrifice

That is, Our Lady's prayer was a sharing in the mission of her Son, who sacrificed himself for us.

In the Dictionary of Marian Theology, we read: "At the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, when she offers up her Son, in the rite of consecration of the First-born, Mary acknowledges that God has the total ownership rights over her Son and therefore she gives up her maternal rights. Mary consecrates her Son to God and associates herself to this offering (Lk 2:24).

Mary's prayer-offering is already an anticipation of the prayer made at the foot of the Cross: at the hour of Calvary she offers her Son and herself for our salvation. In the following message She guides us to follow her example: (28/9/92) "Be faithful to the ministry of prayer. Jesus is constantly offering Himself and interceding before the Father, by means of you. In these times, how greatly prayer is being neglected by so many of my priest-sons! If you saw with my eyes how widespread and deeply imbedded within the Church is this, its interior wound, you too would shed copious tears with me. People no longer pray. They are absorbed in action. All apostolic efficacy is made to rely on activity and on pastoral programming. You forget that you can do nothing by yourselves and that it is Jesus Christ alone who, by means of you, works and saves. You forget that you are useless servants, that you are poor, that you are sinners. Return to prayer. Make the Eucharistic Jesus the centre of your prayer, the secret of your life, the soul of your apostolic action."

Our true prayer must accept sacrifice and solitude in silence, just as Mary did during Jesus' public life, where He received injuries, threats and insults, which culminated in His death on the Cross.

At the hour of the Cross, Mary is present (Jn 19:25-27), in "an attitude that designates her sacrifice", as A. Feuillet says, and she can only repeat the act of

abandonment into the hands of the Father accomplished by her Son as a sign of such an offering (Lk 23:46).

Priests must also live as victims of love offered on the Altar of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In this way it will be easier to make our own death a final act of oblation.

Vatican II (LM38) teaches that this prayer of sacrificial union is the model of every prayer of offering that the Church carries out. The Council explains that in the Eucharistic celebration the prayer to Our Mother is always present, as it is always mentioned in the Eucharistic prayer.

Priesthood is first and foremost an intimate relationship with Jesus. The sadness of Jesus and therefore of our Mother is caused by a priest who doesn't go to Him as a friend.

(27/3/86 - Holy Thursday) "It is a divine mystery of prayer. Your priesthood is expressed in a perennial work of mediation between God and men. And this is exercised by your priestly prayer, above all with the offering to God of the daily Sacrifice of Holy Mass which, by means of you, makes the paschal gift of this Last Supper perennial and universal. The exercise of the priesthood in the gift, to the faithful, of the sacraments instituted by Jesus for your salvation is the perfection of prayer, that is to say, of deep union of life with God. Above all, the perfection of prayer is to be found in your docile and obliging availability to the needs of souls, which often leads you to enter the confessional, as ministers of the sacrament of Penance, through which you can heal the deep wounds caused by many sins."

Our Lady teaches us to imitate her prayer in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. We will quote only one message, which also summarizes the tragedy of our times:

Holy Saturday April 14th '90: "I recollected myself in an incessant prayer, while the tears fell from my eyes in a continuous lament, and my motherly Heart formed, as it were, a cradle of love and of expectation for the new and glorious birth of my Son Jesus. Faith in his divine word, which had always sustained me during his human life and which, in the hours of his painful passion, had become the sole and steady support of my unspeakable pain, now changes to the absolute certitude of his imminent resurrection. And I live, wounded and soothed, mourning and consoled, sorrowing and joyous, because I know that Jesus, torn and killed in such a cruel way, is now about to rise. And at the dawn of the first day after the Sabbath, Jesus Christ, in the splendour of his glorified body, with such great love and filial tenderness, draws close to me, enfolds me

in his arms, enwraps me in his most powerful light and speaks to me divine words of comfort.

Beloved children, keep watch with me in expectation, in the long and painful Holy Saturday which leads to his resurrection and his glorious return. Keep watch with me in expectation, and be strong in your faith to Him, during these times when acts of betrayal and abandonment on the part of his own are being renewed, when the faith of true disciples is being put to sever test by the spread of the most subtle and insidious errors. Keep watch with me in expectation, and be firm in the hope that Jesus will return on the clouds of heaven, in the splendour of his glorified body, as He predicted before the tribunal of Caiaphas, wanting to give a sure sign of his divinity, for these times when doubts are being spread about, concerning his divine nature and the fulfilment of his promises. Keep watch with me in expectation, and be ardent in love, in these times when it has become cool in the hearts of men, and humanity has become a desert for want of life and of love and is more and more consumed and threatened with egoism, with violence, with hunger and with war. Keep watch with me in expectation in these last times of your so lengthy Holy Saturday because the moment is close at hand when my Son Jesus will return on the clouds of heaven, in the splendour of his divine glory.”

Even after Her Assumption into Heaven she is present with us while we adore Jesus in the Eucharist:

(21/8/87) “I want to bring you here today with me, prostrate before every tabernacle, in an act of perpetual adoration and reparation, so that you too may be able to repeat the action that is always being carried out by your heavenly Mother. I am the Mother of Adoration and of Reparation. ... By a continual act of faith in my Son Jesus, I always saw my God, and I adored Him with profound love...

(8/8/86) your heavenly Mother, with her glorious body, which permits her to be both here and in every other place, is truly near every tabernacle in which Jesus is kept.... My Immaculate Heart becomes, for Him, a living, beating, motherly tabernacle of love, of adoration, of thanksgiving and of unceasing reparation... It is not your pastoral plans and your discussion; it is not the human means on which you put reliance and so much assurance, but it is only Jesus in the Eucharist which will give to the whole Church the strength of a complete renewal, which will lead it to be poor, evangelical, chaste, stripped of all those supports on which it relies, holy, beautiful and without spot or wrinkle, in imitation of your heavenly Mother.”

Mary’s prayer in the Cenacle

Our Lady is at the centre of the first nucleus of the early Church, in “constant and unanimous” prayer to invoke the Holy Spirit promised by her Son. An author says “that Marian prayer receives its last connotation as prayer to the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit, that is to say, made in communion with fellow believers, in the bond of ‘one heart and one soul’, with the attitude of continuity which Christ Himself had repeatedly recommended.” (E. Lodi). Consequently, when our Mother urges us so often to gather together in Cenacles of prayer, she does nothing but carry out the command of Jesus himself. It should be noted that the word “Cenacle” is repeated 356 times in the messages.

“The suppliant omnipotence” as it has been called, tells us what it means when we turn to God through Mary: it will be a humble and familiar prayer, therefore, which gives rhythm to our journey of Faith. It leads to an offering and it expresses and nourishes Church unity.

How much time we should dedicate to prayer

Jesus is our teacher in everything; He is our teacher especially in prayer, where He puts himself in communion with the Father. “That is, He gives us a clear message: The Father is the Supreme Number One. Therefore, our communion with the Father should be number one of our time. Before making important decisions, he spent whole nights in prayer.” (D.M)

(11/2/93) - “Another danger which threatens you is that of allowing yourself to be taken up with inordinate activity, and so forgetting the powerful force which prayer has in obtaining the grace of conversion for many of my poor sinful children. And so I have invited you to pray much for the conversion of sinners, by showing you, through my little daughter Bernadette, that the most efficacious prayer, the prayer which is most preferred by me, is that of the Holy Rosary.”

(24/10/84) - “For this I need much prayer. More is obtained through one day of intense prayer than through years of continuous discussions. Pray with faith and trust, with recollection and perseverance”.

Jesus is happy to see us at His feet: He is happy when we choose to dedicate that time to Him alone, giving up other activities that are even dear to us. It’s like parents who are happy when their child comes back from school, because the child is their joy. Therefore, when we are brought by our Mother to go before the Tabernacle, Jesus is happy about our company of love and adoration. Pope Francis said that God is in love with us: He dreams about us. God is happy to be with the children of man. Therefore, by going before the Tabernacle we are not only doing a favour to our soul and to our apostolate, but we are also doing a favour to Jesus who likes our company.

Listen to Jesus and His Mother's reaction when we go before the Tabernacle for Adoration:

(8/8/86): "Beloved sons, how my Heart is filled with joy in seeing you here, on a priestly pilgrimage of adoration, of love, of reparation and of thanksgiving to Jesus, my Son and my God, present in the Eucharist, to console Him for the great emptiness, the great ingratitude and the great indifference, with which He is surrounded in his real and loving presence in all the tabernacles of the earth, on the part of so many of my children, and especially on the part of so many of my beloved sons, the priests. Thank you for the joy which you are giving to the Heart of Jesus, who is smiling upon you with pleasure, as He is transported with tenderness for you. Thank you for the joy which you give to the deep sorrow of the Immaculate Heart of your heavenly Mother."

Our Lady's task is always to lead us to Jesus: When we get up to go to work in the Lord's vineyard, She prepares the way for us and obtains the necessary graces for our work. Then when we go back to Him in Adoration She is still with us and offers her Magnificat while we offer the humble thanksgiving of our heart to the Father.

By no means do **distractions** mean that our prayer is a failure. The Prior of a Benedictine Monastery in Ireland said that we shouldn't worry if we often have distractions or we are tired during adoration: the Lord can work in our souls just the same, because, he said "if this weren't true, we wouldn't have so many saints on our altars." (In Sinu Jesu). Our Lady says:

(28/11/79) "For this, I have called you to prayer. Your priestly prayer, offered with me and joined to your suffering, has incalculable power. Indeed, it has the capacity to bring about a far-reaching chain reaction for good, in which the good effects spread and multiply everywhere in souls."

A few years ago in Collevaenza, **Don Stefano** gave us a Meditation in which he compared the message of the apparitions of La Salette with the Messages of Our Lady in the blue book. At La Salette Our Lady spoke about the crisis and corruption of the clergy. Don Stefano noted that a few phrases used by Our Lady at La Salette regarding the great crisis were practically identical to a few phrases she uses in the blue book.

Don Stefano explained that in those Apparitions Our Lady had laid down the rules of a new Religious Institute, and she appointed the Bishop of the Diocese to establish it. The Bishop founded the Religious Institute, but he didn't adopt the rules Our Lady had suggested.

Don Stefano explained that our Mother waited for the appropriate time to create a Movement that didn't need to depend on a Diocese nor a Religious Institute. But she wanted a spirit that could be suitable for the universal Church, for Priests, religious and lay people. Don Stefano concluded that this is the MMP.

Now that Seminarians, Convents and Monasteries have a great crisis of vocations, Our Mother is presenting to God millions of her children who are a part of innumerable Cenacles across the earth: their living consecration and their life of prayer makes them practically members of innumerable monasteries of people who are fervent in prayer and in their offering to God, even though they live in the world.

In this respect also, Don Gobbi was perhaps the greatest prophet of our times.