

11. March 2023

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 18: "Regular prayer"

"My Lord and my God, grant me everything that draws me closer to you." - exclaims St. Nicholas of Flüe in the second part of his famous prayer.

In mystical theology this part of the spiritual path would be called the "illuminative way". This means that after the intense processes of purification - both the active (of which we have already spoken a little) and the passive - we can know God better. In the illuminative way, Sacred Scripture begins to speak to us more clearly, our way of praying changes, we get more light for our way of following the Lord.... In short, the way becomes easier.

Perhaps we sometimes read with some trepidation the various things that the saints experienced, and we feel frightened and unable to attain holiness. It may even happen that we become discouraged and no longer want to continue on the path, because we fear that situations similar to those experienced by the great saints will befall us, which we find impossible to bear. Perhaps it happens that sometimes we read a certain book at the wrong time, when it is not yet convenient to hear about the most severe sufferings of the saints and the torments endured by the martyrs, described in great detail.

We do not really know what was going on, for example, inside the martyrs: how much the grace of God sustained them and how the Holy Spirit gave them the spirit of fortitude in abundance. So let us not be intimidated. The Lord does not allow us to carry a cross without at the same time giving us the grace to bear it.

Why is it that, as we go on, the way of following becomes easier, when from the outside it would seem to be more and more difficult?

The answer is this: because, as we go on, we grow in love, which makes everything easier. And indeed, the goal of the spiritual path is the full unification of love with God.

All processes of purification serve to set aside that which separates us from God; in other words, that which diminishes or even blocks our loving response to God's love. These are attachment to the world, disordered self-love, our various attachments, etc... Therefore, we can be grateful for every purification, both for those in which we actively cooperate with God's grace, but also for those in which He allows certain circumstances to make us even more receptive to His love and to turn away from all kinds of idols.

In speaking of striving for the virtues, of works of mercy, of fidelity to right doctrine, of fasting, of enduring adversity, we have already touched on various things that bring us closer to God, for they are all efforts to grow in love, to which the Holy Spirit Himself moves us.

Prayer has a special place here, and I would like to emphasise regular prayer. Without prayer there is no spiritual life. If we neglect it, we will soon succumb to temptations. If we neglect it completely, the supernatural life in us will be extinguished.

Today I want to emphasise the importance of regular prayer for our journey. This means that we must set fixed times for prayer - including the Holy Rosary - and also keep to them. Probably many of you already do this, but I want to underline why this constancy in prayer is important.

It is well known that monks, for example, have a fixed rhythm in their daily life and in their prayer. This, together with punctuality, is part of a person's ascetic and spiritual formation.

The time one has set for prayer belongs to the Lord. It is, so to speak, an appointment with Him, and He wants us to keep it. God is waiting for us! In this way, through regular prayer, we train ourselves day by day to realise what we aspire to: that the Lord takes first place in our lives. In order that it does not remain just a pious wish, we must put it into practice in a concrete way, establishing a spiritual order for our life. Once it has been set, it must be fulfilled - unless there are objective situations that prevent it - in order to acquire a "stabilitas" (stability) in our spiritual life.

Moreover, our soul becomes accustomed to prayer, even if at first it has to be educated because of its dispersion and its tendency to be carried away by various states of mind.

In this way, prayer becomes something objective that will increasingly mark our day, even if our life situation does not allow us to commit ourselves to many extended moments of prayer each day. But whatever we can and want to do, we must do regularly, if we want to grow and foster the spiritual life. Suppose, for example, that a mother of a family has a sick child, and she cannot foresee the times when she will have to be ready to care for him or her. In this case, she could perhaps propose a fixed time of prayer each day, at a time when she would not normally be interrupted.

We will continue with the theme of prayer...

Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2019/03/23/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/06/>