

22. March 2023

## LENTEN ITINERARY

### Day 29: "Prayer in times of persecution"

We return today to the theme of prayer; this time from another perspective. Undoubtedly, prayer serves first and foremost to glorify the Lord and to bring the soul into and remain in the "great dialogue" with Him.

In liturgical prayer, we take part together with all the faithful in the prayer of the Bride (the Church) to her Bridegroom. In Holy Mass, as the culmination of liturgical prayer, we unite ourselves to the sacrifice of Our Lord on the Cross. This hierarchy in prayer life should always be preserved and cultivated.

Then we also have meditative prayer, which serves us for interiorisation; and - if God grants it to us - contemplative prayer, which He uses to draw the soul more deeply to Himself and to adorn it with His gifts.

Today I would like to add that there are also prayers which serve directly to ward off the powers of evil. The best known is the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, which is recited at the end of the Traditional Mass when it is not sung. If possible, we should all include this prayer in our daily order. It is a weapon against the powers of darkness, which want to hinder our way of following Christ and also to exert their influence on the Church and the world. Every prayer uttered in faith will weaken their power, and thus we can consciously fight on the side of the Archangel Michael so that the Lord will rebuke these spirits (Jd 1:9).

In various meditations I have alluded to the fact that we are in times of apocalyptic character. These are times in which the power that *"plot together against the Lord and his anointed"* (Ps 2:2) is becoming more and more clearly perceived. The Church is also under attack, as the late Pope Benedict XVI said: "The greatest enemy of the Church is not outside, but within her".

Persecution could befall the faithful, which they can hardly imagine at the moment, but which in fact are already present and manifest. In this context, I would like to refer to

the importance of prayer in order to be able to stand firm in times of persecution. We need to equip ourselves with an "inner treasury of prayers". It would be good, for example, to know a psalm or two by heart, to learn to practise the prayer of the heart, to know how to pray the Rosary interiorly, to make the prayer of recollection our own, etc....

I say this because we cannot rule out the possibility that, in times of increasing persecution, we may be temporarily unable to attend public worship. Let us remember the measures that were taken in the wake of the coronavirus, which for a time denied us access to worship. We cannot exclude the possibility that persecution may increase to such an extent that - as has happened in history and is still happening in parts of the world - it is forbidden to possess or read the Bible or other prayer books, etc... If satanic evil spreads further, it may also manifest itself in the fact that everything that bears witness to God is viewed with suspicion and fought against.

This is why we need a kind of "inner cell" or, to put it in St. Teresa's terms, that "little heaven" to which we can always withdraw and, unnoticed, cultivate a dialogue with God. In other words, we must build an "interior temple" in which we can adore the Lord and speak intimately with Him.

We would be wise to put this into practice now, because on the one hand it will help us to deepen our spiritual life, and on the other hand it trains us now to be able to continue our religious practice in situations of persecution. From this source we will draw the strength to resist in all adversities with the power of the Lord.

Difficult times call for special measures, and may they find us well prepared!

Before closing today's meditation, let us take a brief look back at the stages we have travelled so far in our Lenten journey:

- The call to conversion.
- Fasting.
- Doing everything with our eyes fixed on the Lord.
- Serenity in adversity.
- Rejection of temptations in the Name of the Lord.
- Works of mercy.
- The Word of God.

- Penance.
  - Purification of the outer and inner temple.
  - The fight against vices: envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth, and wrath
  - The virtues, beginning with fortitude and prudence.
  - A regular rhythm of prayer.
  - Passive purification.
  - The grace of the sacraments.
  - Fidelity to Tradition.
  - Listening to the prophets, with special reference to the prophetic messages we receive from heaven.
  - Contemplation and recollected prayer.
  - St Joseph and the mission of the man.
  - Obedience in all its splendour.
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Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/30/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/17/>