



19. August 2024

SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Introduction to Prayer

Over the next few days we would like to offer our listeners a series of meditations on the theme of prayer. They can certainly be helpful in the spiritual life. If any of our listeners would like to continue listening to the Bible meditations for each day, they can follow the links at the end of the text.

Today will simply be an introduction, while in the next few days we will develop the preparation for prayer, the sufferings of prayer, the different forms of prayer, etc. I hope that the meditations that follow will help us to more deeply appreciate the value of prayer and encourage us to practice it.

Without prayer, it is impossible to deepen our relationship with God, because prayer is a living dialogue with the Lord; it is the way in which He speaks to us. It is therefore an illusion to believe that it is enough to practice good works, and that otherwise we do not need direct dialogue with God. Certainly, there are special vocations for cultivating prayer with greater intensity and there are people who dedicate their whole lives to it. But what counts for every Christian is that they cannot neglect prayer, otherwise they would not have grasped that the character of the relationship with God is love. A marriage, for example, does not stay alive only because of what the spouses do together, but also by the dialogue, the exchange and the gestures of love that are proper to marriage. The same happens in our relationship with God... The Lord wants us to listen to Him and to open our hearts to Him, entrusting to Him all that we carry within us. And prayer is an eminent way to do this! St. Teresa of Avila, a truly prayerful woman, tells us that prayer is "the great dialogue with God".

General Aspects of Prayer

Prayer is a great gift from God and is the soul of the spiritual life. Through it, we have the joy of entering into an ever more intimate union with God already in this earthly life.

All the various forms of prayer have one goal in common: first, the glorification and adoration of God; and second, our own transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the face of Christ shines ever more brightly in us and our union with God becomes deeper and deeper. Therefore, prayer serves both for one's own sanctification and for the sanctification of the world, because, through it, the Holy Spirit impels us to do our part for the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

The simplest key to access the world of prayer is to remember that God's relationship with us is a relationship of love. The reason for our existence is God's love for us, and He is constantly winning us over and striving to make us more receptive to His love.

Seen from the human perspective, prayer is the response to divine love. Through it we enter into the great dialogue with God, which is kindled in us through the Holy Spirit. In prayer, our most intimate contact with God's Being takes place. In other words, there is a profound meeting of hearts: our heart with God's heart.

And it is precisely with Him that we can be face to face, without scruples and without fear, without false justifications and without masks, without having to prove our worth; simply by responding to that dialogue of love that He has already begun with us long ago!

Every form of prayer will be valuable to the extent that it is said with the heart, that is, when the person is integrally present in it.

There are ways to achieve this presence, for we are not yet always and everywhere focused on God with our whole being. In fact, it is precisely prayer that awakens our deepest essence as persons.

We will only be able to abandon ourselves fully to God, with both our good and dark sides, when we have encountered His unconditional love. Only then will we be truly free from the tensions in our lives; those tensions that are generated when we strive in vain to secure acceptance of our own lives, thus easily falling into dependence on other people.

Prayer allows God to work in us through His Spirit, so that those attitudes of ours that are contrary to God's will and all the obstacles that we place in the way of His work can be overcome, and then the Lord can glorify Himself through us.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2020/08/17/>