27 November 2026
ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
Part XI
"Summary"

We are already very close to the season of Advent, which will prepare us in the coming weeks for the feast of our Savior's birth. At the same time, we must keep alive the awareness that the same Lord who was born in Bethlehem will return as King at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. Blessed is the one who is prepared and awaits His coming with joy!

Now that I have set forth individual aspects of the spiritual life in ten consecutive reflections, this eleventh part is intended to serve as a summary.

The entire series is addressed to people who are familiar with the Christian faith, whether they grew up in it or encountered it at a later stage in life. They acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord. As Scripture testifies, no one can call Jesus "Lord" without the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3).

Following Christ begins with a conscious confession of the Lord, and its goal is for us to be fully united with the will of God. We have also considered that we need a sound foundation for this spiritual journey. This foundation is the love of our heavenly Father, who guides and sustains us on this path.

On the path of following Christ, the grace of baptism—which we received either as children or at a later time, if we were baptized later in life—unfolds. This usually happens when one has encountered the Lord more deeply.

On this path toward the goal of union with God, the Spirit of God desires to transform us into the image that our Creator has laid within us. This is first and foremost the work of the Holy Spirit, but it also requires our cooperation.

This cooperation consists, in particular, in listening to the Holy Spirit, who desires to lead us into all truth and to unite us more deeply with God. This inner journey requires conformity with the authentic teaching of the Church, as handed down by the Apostles,

and is strengthened by the proper reception of the holy sacraments. The more one follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the smoother the path becomes, and listening to God's voice becomes a great joy.

Prayer is essential on this path. It must never be neglected but should grow ever deeper. Its many forms all share the same goal: communion with God is to become more intimate and natural. The great conversation with God has begun, and it will never end.

Recollection and silence serve the organic development of the life of prayer; we should seek them out and practice them. Sometimes, however, God simply grants us this recollection when He draws the soul to Himself. Here the soul experiences a taste of contemplation, which mystics often refer to as immersion in God.

Proper self-knowledge is also essential for our spiritual growth, and we should practice it without fear of our loving Father. It helps us shed false images of ourselves and enables us to see ourselves as God sees us. It is also important so that our journey of faith remains realistic, free from all artificiality that can arise from false images of ourselves.

Prayer becomes a constant dialogue with God, and we live more consciously in His presence. In this way, an ever-more-subtle perception of the Holy Spirit's guidance also unfolds. Happy is the one who has a faithful and discerning spiritual director. If one does not have one, then one must draw upon the rich literature of spiritual teachers to gain greater certainty on the spiritual path.

Usually, in the initial phase of discipleship, once faith has become somewhat established, the so-called "active purification" takes place. In this process, with God's help, we strive to detach ourselves from everything that still separates us from Him. This may include disordered inclinations toward the sensual realm, attitudes that stand in the way of love, excessive attachment to other people, desires that do not bring us closer to God, or an excessive inclination toward the world and its ideals that do not correspond to the Spirit of the Lord.

If we conscientiously follow this path of purification and rise again after setbacks, then the Word of God shines ever more brightly with its light. We begin to understand the Word better and to view everything through God's eyes.

An essential aid, or more precisely, a necessity if we wish to grow spiritually, is mental discipline. This involves becoming "master in our own house" and not allowing ourselves to be controlled either by false thoughts that the devil seeks to instill in us or by thoughts that arise from our unpurified hearts. We must deal with these thoughts in an appropriate way, and we must also leave useless thoughts behind.

Finally, I pointed out how important silence is. It serves both to help us practice mental discipline more effectively and to allow us to absorb God's presence more deeply and work on our own hearts.

The last reflection on the willingness to change reminded us that we must be ready to allow ourselves to be completely transformed by the Lord, to give up our own ideas about ourselves, and to trust that, through God's wise guidance, we will become what He intended us to be when He created us.

Tomorrow I will conclude the series with Part Twelve, offering a brief glimpse of how close we can come to God if we remain faithful to the path of discipleship.

Reflection on the Daily Reading in the Novus Ordo:
https://en.elijamission.net/do-not-worship-the-beast-2/