



The Holy See

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Catechesis on prayer - 25. *Prayer and the Trinity*. 1

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In our journey of catechesis on prayer, today and next week we will see how, thanks to Jesus Christ, prayer opens us up to the Trinity — to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit — to the immense sea of God who is Love. It is Jesus who opened up Heaven to us and projected us into a relationship with God. It was he who did this: he opened up to us this relationship with the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what the Apostle John says at the conclusion of the prologue of his Gospel: “No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (*Jn* 1:18). Jesus revealed the identity to us, this identity of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We really did not know how to pray: what words, what feelings and what language were appropriate for God. In that request the disciples addressed to the Teacher, which we have often recalled in the course of these catecheses, there is all of humanity’s fumbling, repeated attempts, often unsuccessful, to address the Creator: “Lord, teach us to pray” (*Lk* 11:1).

Not all prayers are equal, and not all are convenient: the Bible itself attests to the negative outcome of many prayers, which are rejected. Perhaps God at times is not pleased with our prayers and we are not even aware of this. God looks at the hands of those who pray: to make them pure it is not necessary to wash them; if anything, one should refrain from evil acts. Saint Francis prayed: “*Nullu homo ène dignu te mentovare*”, that is, “no man is worthy to mention Your name” (*Canticle of the Sun*).

But perhaps the most moving acknowledgment of the poverty of our prayer came from the lips of the Roman centurion who one day begged Jesus to heal his sick servant (cf. *Mt* 8:5–13). He felt totally inadequate: he was not a Jew, he was an officer in the detested occupying army. But his concern for his servant emboldens him, and he says: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come

under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (v. 8). It is the phrase we also repeat in every Eucharistic liturgy. To dialogue with God is a grace: we are not worthy of it, we have no rights to claim, we “limp” with every word and every thought... But Jesus is the door that opens us to this dialogue with God.

Why should humanity be loved by God? There are no obvious reasons, there is no proportion.... So much so that most mythologies do not contemplate the possibility of a god who cares about human affairs; on the contrary, they are considered bothersome and boring, entirely negligible. Let us remember God’s phrase to his people, repeated in Deuteronomy: “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us?”. This closeness of God is the revelation! Some philosophers say that God can only think of himself. If anything, it is we humans who try to persuade the deity and be pleasing to his eyes. Hence the duty of “religion”, with the procession of sacrifices and devotions to be offered continuously to ingratiate ourselves with a mute God, an indifferent God. There is no dialogue. It was only Jesus, it was only the revelation of God to Moses before Jesus, when God introduced himself; it was only the Bible that opened us up to the path of dialogue with God. Let us remember: “What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as ours?”; this closeness of God that opens us up to dialogue with him.

A God who loves humanity: we would never have had the courage to believe in him, had we not known Jesus. The knowledge of Jesus made us understand this, it revealed this to us. It is the scandal that we find inscribed in the parable of the merciful father, or in that of the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep (cf. *Lk 15*). We would not have been able to conceive or even comprehend such stories if we had not encountered Jesus. What God is prepared to die for people? What God loves always and patiently, without demanding to be loved in return? What God accepts the tremendous lack of gratitude of a son who asks for his inheritance in advance and leaves home, squandering ev-ery-thing? (cf. *Lk 15:12–13*).

It is Jesus who reveals God’s heart. Thus Jesus tells us through his life the extent to which God is Father. *Tam Pater nemo* : No one is Father as he is. The paternity that is closeness, compassion and tenderness. Let us not forget these three words, that are God’s style: closeness, compassion and tenderness. It is his way of expressing his paternity towards us. It is difficult for us to imagine from afar the love with which the most Holy Trinity is filled, and the depth of the reciprocal benevolence that exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eastern icons offer us a glimpse of this mystery that is the origin and joy of the whole universe.

Above all, it was beyond us to believe that this divine love would expand, landing on our human shore: we are the recipients of a love that has no equal on earth. The Catechism explains: “The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father” (no. 2664). And this is the grace of our faith. We really could not have hoped for a higher vocation: the humanity of Jesus — God made himself close in Jesus — made available to us the very life of the Trinity; he opened, he threw wide open this door of the mystery of the love of

the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Special Greetings

I cordially greet the English-speaking faithful. May our Lenten journey bring us to the joy of Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Lastly, as usual, my thoughts turn to *the elderly*, to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. May you know how to discover in the mystery of God, who gives himself for the salvation of all, the strength to face difficult moments. I offer my blessing to everyone.

APPEALS

Sad news of bloody clashes and loss of life continue to arrive from Myanmar. I would like to draw the attention of the authorities involved so that dialogue may prevail over repression and harmony over discord. I also appeal to the international community to ensure that the aspirations of the people of Myanmar are not stifled by violence. May the young people of that beloved land be granted the hope of a future where hatred and injustice make way for encounter and reconciliation. Finally, I repeat the wish I expressed a month ago: that the path towards democracy taken in recent years by Myanmar may be resumed through the concrete gesture of the release of the various political leaders imprisoned (cf. [*Address to the Diplomatic Corps*](#), 8 February 2021).

[The day after tomorrow, God willing, I will go to Iraq](#) for a three-day pilgrimage. For a long time I have wanted to meet those people who have suffered so much; to meet that martyred Church in the land of Abraham. Together with the other religious leaders, we shall also take another step forward in fraternity among believers. I ask you to accompany this apostolic journey with your prayers, so that it may unfold in the best possible way and bear the hoped-for fruits. The Iraqi people are waiting for us; they also awaited [Saint John Paul II](#), who was not permitted to go. One cannot disappoint a people for the second time. Let us pray that this journey will be a good one.

Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, in our continuing catechesis on prayer, we now consider how our prayer leads us into the life of the Holy Trinity, into the eternal mystery of God's love, which is the source and joy of the entire universe. Jesus himself revealed this path for us by taking on our flesh and revealing the Father's infinite love. By his paschal mystery, he opened for us the gates of

heaven and by the gift of the Holy Spirit he has given us a share in his own filial relationship to the Father. Conscious of our unworthiness of so great a gift, we, like the disciples, can cry out “Lord, teach us to pray” (*Lk 11:1*). Jesus teaches us not only the words to use in prayer, but shows us the boundless mercy of the Father, who embraces his prodigal children and goes freely in search of every lost sheep. May our prayer awaken in us the consciousness of our lofty vocation in Christ and draw us ever more fully into the loving communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.