

THE CATHOLIC ESSENTIALS

Summer Sermon Series 2015

Week 2: The Essential Encounter: Prayer, Scripture, and the Sacraments

I. ON PRAYER

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

²⁷ And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ We

know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8: 26-28

And pray also without ceasing for the rest of mankind (for there is in them a hope of repentance), that they may find God.

St. Ignatius of Antioch,
Ephesians 10.1

Remember, Lord, Your Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in Your love; and gather it together from the four winds — even the Church which has been sanctified — into Your kingdom for which You have prepared for it; for Yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent... Amen.

Didache: Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 10.5-6

2590 “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C).

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

2591 God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

Praying actualizes and deepens our communion with God. Our prayer can and should arise above all from our heart, from our needs, our hopes, our joys, our sufferings, from our shame over sin, and from our gratitude from the

good. It can and should be a wholly personal prayer.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*

I would sum it up like this: the power that changes the world and transforms it into the Kingdom of God, in silence and without fanfare, is faith - and prayer is the expression of faith. When faith is filled with love for

God, recognized as a good and just Father, prayer becomes persevering, insistent, it becomes a groan of the spirit, a cry of the soul that penetrates God's

Heart. **Thus, prayer becomes the greatest transforming power in the world.** . . . It is prayer that keeps the torch of faith alight.

Pope Benedict XVI,
Homily, Sunday, October 21, 2007

II. ON SACRED SCRIPTURE

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ **but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.**

John 20:30-31

¹⁶ **All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching,** for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

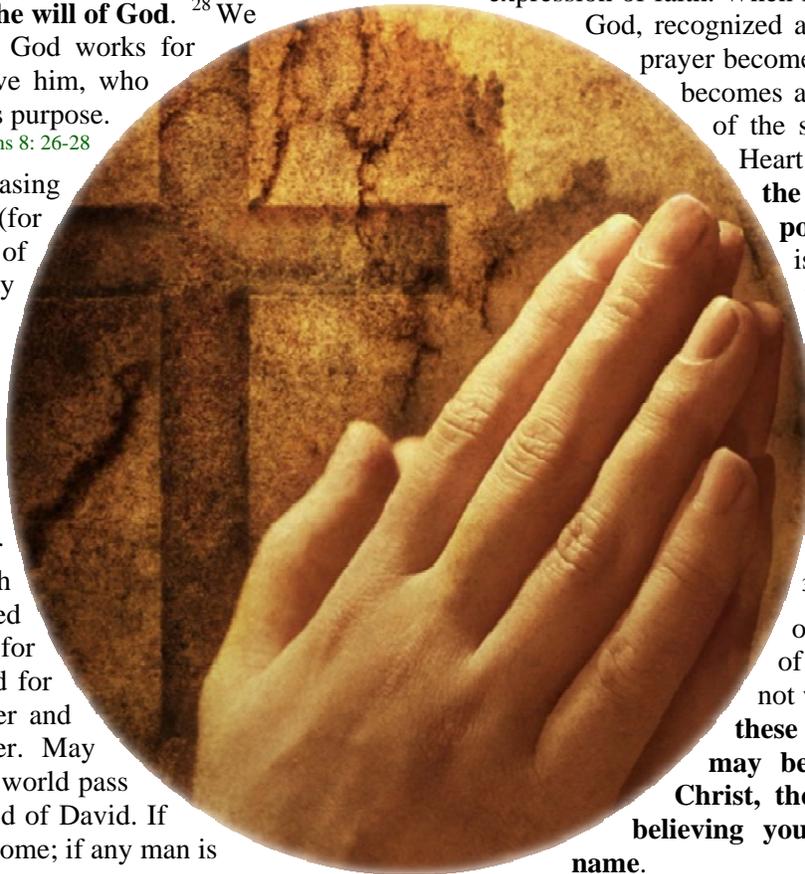
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Why do you not spend the time which you have freed from your duties in the church in reading? Why do you not go back again to see Christ? Why do you not address Him, and hear His voice?

St. Ambrose, *De Officium* 1.20.88

103 . . . the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).



104 In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, “but as what it really is, the word of God.” “In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

109 In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

But I ask you a question: **do we take a little time each day to listen to Jesus, to listen to Jesus’ word?** And do we listen to Jesus each day in the Gospel, do we read a passage from the Gospel? Or are we afraid of this, or unaccustomed to reading it? To listen to Jesus’ word in order to nourish ourselves! This means that **Jesus’ word is the most nourishing food for the soul:** it nourishes our souls, it nourishes our faith! I suggest that each day you take a few minutes and read a nice passage of the Gospel and hear what happens there. **Hearing Jesus, and each day Jesus’ word enters our hearts and makes us stronger in faith. I also suggest that you have a little Gospel, very little, to carry in your pocket, in your purse, and when we have a little time** you can also read during the day.

Pope Francis, Angelus - March 16, 2014

III. ON SACRED TRADITION

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brethren, **stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us,** either by word of mouth or by letter. *1 Thessalonians 2:13-15*

It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches ... For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries ... they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves.

St. Irenæus of Lyon, Adversus Hæreses, 3.3.1

97 “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” (*DV 10*), in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

98 “The Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she

herself is, all that she believes” (*DV 8 §1*).

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).

IV. ON SACRAMENTS

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.** ²⁷

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:23-27

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

The same holy Roman Church also holds and teaches that the ecclesiastical sacraments are seven: namely, one is **baptism**, concerning which we have spoken above; another is the sacrament of **confirmation** which the bishops confer through the imposition of hands when anointing the reborn; another is **penance**; another the **Eucharist**; Another the sacrament of **orders**; another is **matrimony**; another extreme unction, which according to the doctrine of St. James is given to the sick. The same Roman Church prepares the sacrament of the Eucharist from unleavened bread, holding and teaching that in the same sacrament the bread is changed into the body, and the wine into the blood of Jesus Christ.

Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum, 860

1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are *efficacious* because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son’s Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power. *Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.).*

The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. **No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him.** He sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, § 112