

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE TRADITION OF PRAYER

2650 Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within "the believing and praying Church,"<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray.

2651 The tradition of Christian prayer is one of the ways in which the tradition of faith takes shape and grows, especially through the contemplation and study of believers who treasure in their hearts the events and words of the economy of salvation, and through their profound grasp of the spiritual realities they experience.<sup>2</sup>

#### Article 1

### AT THE WELLSPRINGS OF PRAYER

2652 The Holy Spirit is the living water "welling up to eternal life"<sup>3</sup> in the heart that prays. It is he who teaches us to accept it at its source: Christ. Indeed in the Christian life there are several wellsprings where Christ awaits us to enable us to drink of the Holy Spirit.

#### The Word of God

2653 The Church "forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (⇒ Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.... Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man.

For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles."<sup>4</sup>

2654 The spiritual writers, paraphrasing Matthew 7:7, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer "Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation."<sup>5</sup>

#### The Liturgy of the Church

2655 In the sacramental liturgy of the Church, the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit proclaims, makes present, and communicates the mystery of salvation, which is continued in the heart that prays. the spiritual writers sometimes compare the heart to an altar. Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out "in secret,"<sup>6</sup> prayer is always prayer of the Church; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.<sup>7</sup>

#### The theological virtues

2656 One enters into prayer as one enters into liturgy: by the narrow gate of faith. Through the signs of his presence, it is the Face of the Lord that we seek and desire; it is his Word that we want to hear and keep.

2657 The Holy Spirit, who instructs us to celebrate the liturgy in expectation of Christ's return, teaches us - to pray in hope. Conversely, the prayer of the Church and personal prayer nourish hope in us. the psalms especially, with their concrete and varied language, teach us to fix our hope in God: "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry."<sup>8</sup> As St. Paul prayed: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that

by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."<sup>9</sup>

2658 "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."<sup>10</sup> Prayer, formed by the liturgical life, draws everything into the love by which we are loved in Christ and which enables us to respond to him by loving as he has loved us. Love is the source of prayer; whoever draws from it reaches the summit of prayer. In the words of the Cure of Ars: I love you, O my God, and my only desire is to love you until the last breath of my life. I love you, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving you, than live without loving you. I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally.... My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.<sup>11</sup>

### "Today"

2659 We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of each day, to make prayer spring up from us. Jesus' teaching about praying to our Father is in the same vein as his teaching about providence:<sup>12</sup> time is in the Father's hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: "O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts."<sup>13</sup>

2660 Prayer in the events of each day and each moment is one of the secrets of the kingdom revealed to "little children," to the servants of Christ, to the poor of the Beatitudes. It is right and good to pray so that the coming of the kingdom of justice and peace may influence the march of history, but it is just as important to bring

the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations; all forms of prayer can be the leaven to which the Lord compares the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

### IN BRIEF

2661 By a living transmission -Tradition - the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray.

2662 The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.

### Article 2

### THE WAY OF PRAYER

2663 In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography. the Magisterium of the Church<sup>15</sup> has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith; it is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning, always in relation to Jesus Christ.

### Prayer to the Father

2664 There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray "in the name" of Jesus. the sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father.

### Prayer to Jesus

2665 The prayer of the Church, nourished by the Word of God and the celebration of the liturgy, teaches us to pray to the Lord Jesus. Even though her prayer is addressed

above all to the Father, it includes in all the liturgical traditions forms of prayer addressed to Christ. Certain psalms, given their use in the Prayer of the Church, and the New Testament place on our lips and engrave in our hearts prayer to Christ in the form of invocations: Son of God, Word of God, Lord, Savior, Lamb of God, King, Beloved Son, Son of the Virgin, Good Shepherd, our Life, our Light, our Hope, our Resurrection, Friend of mankind....

2666 But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. the divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity the Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: "Jesus," "YHWH saves."<sup>16</sup> The name "Jesus" contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him.<sup>17</sup>

2667 This simple invocation of faith developed in the tradition of prayer under many forms in East and West. the most usual formulation, transmitted by the spiritual writers of the Sinai, Syria, and Mt. Athos, is the invocation, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners." It combines the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 with the cry of the publican and the blind men begging for light.<sup>18</sup> By it the heart is opened to human wretchedness and the Savior's mercy.

2668 The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost

by heaping up empty phrases,<sup>19</sup> but holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience."<sup>20</sup> This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus.

2669 The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. Christian prayer loves to follow the way of the cross in the Savior's steps. the stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world.

### **"Come, Holy Spirit"**

2670 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup> Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace. Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action.

If the Spirit should not be worshiped, how can he divinize me through Baptism? If he should be worshiped, should he not be the object of adoration?<sup>22</sup>

2671 The traditional form of petition to the Holy Spirit is to invoke the Father through Christ our Lord to give us the Consoler Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Jesus insists on this petition to be made in his name at the very moment when he promises the gift of the Spirit of Truth.<sup>24</sup> But the simplest and most direct prayer is also traditional, "Come, Holy Spirit," and every liturgical tradition has

developed it in antiphons and hymns. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.<sup>25</sup> Heavenly King, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, treasure of all good and source of all life, come dwell in us, cleanse and save us, you who are All Good.<sup>26</sup>

2672 The Holy Spirit, whose anointing permeates our whole being, is the interior Master of Christian prayer. He is the artisan of the living tradition of prayer. To be sure, there are as many paths of prayer as there are persons who pray, but it is the same Spirit acting in all and with all. It is in the communion of the Holy Spirit that Christian prayer is prayer in the Church.

### **In communion with the holy Mother of God**

2673 In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church with the Mother of Jesus.<sup>27</sup>

2674 Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties."<sup>28</sup> Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (hodigitria), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West.

2675 Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested in his

mysteries. In countless hymns and antiphons expressing this prayer, two movements usually alternate with one another: the first "magnifies" the Lord for the "great things" he did for his lowly servant and through her for all human beings.<sup>29</sup> The second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused.

2676 This twofold movement of prayer to Mary has found a privileged expression in the Ave Maria:

Hail Mary [or Rejoice, Mary]: the greeting of the angel Gabriel opens this prayer. It is God himself who, through his angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of his humble servant and to exult in the joy he finds in her.<sup>30</sup>

Full of grace, the Lord is with thee: These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. the grace with which she is filled is the presence of him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice . . . O Daughter of Jerusalem . . . the Lord your God is in your midst."<sup>31</sup> Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells. She is "the dwelling of God . . . with men."<sup>32</sup> Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to him who has come to dwell in her and whom she is about to give to the world.

Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "Filled with the Holy Spirit," Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed."<sup>33</sup> "Blessed is she who believed...."<sup>34</sup> Mary is "blessed among

women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Abraham, because of his faith, became a blessing for all the nations of the earth.<sup>35</sup> Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb."

2677 Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, "and why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"<sup>36</sup> Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word."<sup>37</sup> By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy," the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. and our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing<sup>38</sup> to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise.

2678 Medieval piety in the West developed the prayer of the rosary as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany called the Akathistos and the Paracletis remained closer to the choral office in the Byzantine churches, while the Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac traditions preferred popular hymns and songs to the Mother of God. But in the Ave Maria, the theotokia, the hymns of St. Ephrem or St.

Gregory of Narek, the tradition of prayer is basically the same.

2679 Mary is the perfect Orans (prayer), a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes,<sup>39</sup> for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. the prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope.<sup>40</sup>

## **IN BRIEF**

2680 Prayer is primarily addressed to the Father; it can also be directed toward Jesus, particularly by the invocation of his holy name: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners."

2681 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). the Church invites us to invoke the Holy Spirit as the interior Teacher of Christian prayer.

2682 Because of Mary's singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done for her, and to entrust supplications and praises to her.

## **Article 3**

### **GUIDES FOR PRAYER**

#### **A cloud of witnesses**

2683 The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom,<sup>41</sup> especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings,

and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were "put in charge of many things."<sup>42</sup> Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.

2684 In the communion of saints, many and varied spiritualities have been developed throughout the history of the churches. the personal charism of some witnesses to God's love for men has been handed on, like "the spirit" of Elijah to Elisha and John the Baptist, so that their followers may have a share in this spirit.<sup>43</sup> A distinct spirituality can also arise at the point of convergence of liturgical and theological currents, bearing witness to the integration of the faith into a particular human environment and its history. the different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit.... The Spirit is truly the dwelling of the saints and the saints are for the Spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple.<sup>44</sup>

### **Servants of prayer**

2685 The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the "domestic church" where God's children learn to pray "as the Church" and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church's living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit....2686 Ordained ministers are also responsible for the formation in prayer of

their brothers and sisters in Christ. Servants of the Good Shepherd, they are ordained to lead the People of God to the living waters of prayer: the Word of God, the liturgy, the theological life (the life of faith, hope, and charity), and the Today of God in concrete situations.<sup>45</sup>

2687 Many religious have consecrated their whole lives to prayer. Hermits, monks, and nuns since the time of the desert fathers have devoted their time to praising God and interceding for his people. the consecrated life cannot be sustained or spread without prayer; it is one of the living sources of contemplation and the spiritual life of the Church.

2688 The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on the Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for the discernment and education of popular piety.<sup>46</sup> The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.

2689 Prayer groups, indeed "schools of prayer," are today one of the signs and one of the driving forces of renewal of prayer in the Church, provided they drink from authentic wellsprings of Christian prayer. Concern for ecclesial communion is a sign of true prayer in the Church.

2690 The Holy Spirit gives to certain of the faithful the gifts of wisdom, faith and discernment for the sake of this common good which is prayer (spiritual direction). Men and women so endowed are true servants of the living tradition of prayer.

According to St. John of the Cross, the person wishing to advance toward perfection should "take care into whose hands he entrusts himself, for as the master is, so will the disciple be, and as the father is so will be the son." and further: "In addition to being learned and discreet a director should be experienced.... If the spiritual director has no experience of the spiritual life, he will be incapable of leading into it the souls whom God is calling to it, and he will not even understand them."<sup>47</sup>

### **Places favorable for prayer**

2691 The church, the house of God, is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. It is also the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. the choice of a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer.

- For personal prayer, this can be a "prayer corner" with the Sacred Scriptures and icons, in order to be there, in secret, before our Father.<sup>48</sup> In a Christian family, this kind of little oratory fosters prayer in common.

- In regions where monasteries exist, the vocation of these communities is to further the participation of the faithful in the Liturgy of the Hours and to provide necessary solitude for more intense personal prayer.<sup>49</sup>

- Pilgrimages evoke our earthly journey toward heaven and are traditionally very special occasions for renewal in prayer. For pilgrims seeking living water, shrines are special places for living the forms of Christian prayer "in Church."

### **IN BRIEF**

2692 In prayer, the pilgrim Church is associated with that of the saints, whose intercession she asks.

2693 The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are precious guides for the spiritual life.

2694 The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer.

2695 Ordained ministers, the consecrated life, catechesis, prayer groups, and "spiritual direction" ensure assistance within the Church in the practice of prayer.

2696 The most appropriate places for prayer are personal or family oratories, monasteries, places of pilgrimage, and above all the church, which is the proper place for liturgical prayer for the parish community and the privileged place for Eucharistic adoration.