



WHAT DO WE PROPOSE WHEN WE SAY APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER?

Putting the Apostleship of Prayer into practice

Introduction

Why and for whom is the Apostleship of Prayer useful?

The Apostleship of Prayer (AP) is a valuable instrument which offers all Christians a simple and profound spirituality. This proposal unites already committed Christians to the Eucharist and the Heart of Jesus and offers them an opportunity to strengthen their spiritual life day by day. The AP is a proposal of renewal for people who work in every kind of Church activity: parishes, colleges, institutions, NGOs, publishing, etc.

At the same time, the AP is a tool for huge masses of Christians who wish to become adults in the Church and do not know how to for lack of training, because of poverty and limited time and means, because they live in "irregular" situations, or for lack of suitable pastoral help. The AP offers the real possibility of helping large numbers of brothers and sisters of every age and condition, "to unite their prayers and lives to the prayer and mission of the Church".

The XIX century Vals students had their methods of prayer, practiced Saint Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises for eight days every year, lived a spiritually committed life... "and yet they lost the feeling of their devotions, prayers, Eucharists, studies, services, community life etc. Father Gautrelet taught them to put everything into the availability which becomes joyfulness through daily offering to the Father's Plan and becomes effective through carrying out what corresponds to it, uniting it all in prayer to what concerns and occupies the Church..." (J. A. Medina, S.J.).

The proposal of the AP is simple in its practice but ambitious in its aims. It is truly a path of sanctity for today's Christian. It invites him to place Jesus at the centre of his daily life, renouncing his own desires and caprices. It teaches him to ask the Holy Spirit each day to conform his choices and decisions to God's will. It allows him to discover that living in the love of Jesus' Heart is a path of fulfilment, that changes his own heart, that leads to deep liberation and true joy. It makes him realize that the path of egoism and narcissism only lead to unhappiness and frustration.

How, in practice, does one live this path of love proposed by the AP?

The basic method

When we come to the chapter of the specific practices of the AP the first thing to say is that there are few specific practices since what we are promoting is a form of living the existing ecclesial practices with greater awareness. The AP does not add anything new to Christian spirituality but rather helps to live what is essential to it.

The first thing to do is to give due value to and live our condition of baptized people. Granted the celebration of the sacrament, our spirituality can be summed up in living its significance. This consists in discovering the inestimable gift of being beloved sons and daughters of God as Jesus lived it, from his Son's Heart. Baptism makes us sons. Consecrates us to the Father to live dependent on his love. It incorporates us into the family of God's sons and daughters which is the Church. It grants us the Holy Spirit which makes us cry out "Abba" and makes it possible for our lives to be united in all things to that of Jesus Christ. The essence of the AP is contained in this fruitful living of the baptismal spirit.

The daily offering of one's life

Our daily offering is the most characteristic practice of the AP with which a baptized person becomes aware of the spiritual value he can give to his own life, including the simplest acts, and offer them to the Father in union with Christ.

This offering makes us see that we can seek, meet and serve God in all the people and things which surround us; it transforms the whole of life into prayer of intercession in front of the Father for the world; it strengthens the bonds with the Universal Church, feeling that the problems which affect the whole of it are our own. Carried out earnestly, it also transforms the person who practises it: it is not easy to offer one's daily work to the Lord and at the same time maintain attitudes and thoughts contrary to the Gospel (Taken from the leaflet: *The Spirituality of the AP*, Spain, 2007).

The goal is clear and highly desirable: it is that of meeting and serving God in all things united with the Church, but how can we achieve this?

A step-by-step method to live the Eucharist as a member of the AP

1. Begin by being aware of your baptism. On the day you were baptized God adopted you into his family and called you his "beloved child". He joined you to his own Son that day, "to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5).
2. Accept the friendship Jesus offers you. You are dear to him and he loves you very much. He opens you his heart and wishes to be always in yours. He knows you are sorry for the sins which have alienated you from him, and is very eager to forgive you.
3. Each morning offer yourself and your day — all your prayers, works, joys, and sufferings; every thought, word, and deed; every breath you take and every beat of your heart — to God in union with Jesus' heart.
4. Renew your offering throughout the day. Remind yourself that your life is meaningful because you have offered it and united it with Jesus' life. This makes you an apostle, and you have a mission. You have been sent to witness to Jesus by the way you live your life and how you help those who are in need.

5. In the Eucharist this offering gains full meaning. Participate in Sunday Mass and, as much as possible, in weekday Mass. Go and meet Jesus there, waiting to show you his love. Then, when you discover he is there offering his life to you, you will join your own life-offering to his, together with the priest who is celebrating and with the whole Church, and praise the Father. You will learn to live your whole day in this attitude, and, in this way, every moment of your life will be lived as an extension of the Mass.

6. Since you were baptized into the Body of Christ, the Church, unite your personal mission with the whole Church's mission. Unite your personal prayer with the whole Church's prayer. The Pope is the Vicar of Christ who carries the needs of the Church and the world in his heart. Each month he proposes two of his main concerns, asking people to join him in prayer. Learn about and pray for these intentions, offering your day for them. Be open to ways that God may be calling you to address them.

7. Make an examen or evening review. The important question is not "What did I do wrong today?" but rather "What has God done with the gift that I gave him at the beginning of the day?" I will also see what I have done wrong, but it is more important to see what God has done right. And I ask him to help me do things better the next day.

8. Go regularly to the Sacrament of Reconciliation to celebrate Jesus' forgiveness, renewing through the Church the grace of living in his friendship.

9. Be close to Mary, loving her tenderly. Carry her in your heart, seek her as the best companion for your journey with Jesus.

What words shall I use to offer myself to God every day? Express your offering in the way that is most meaningful to you. Use your own words or those of someone else. There are many forms of the daily offering, ancient and modern. Our daily Morning Offering could be put in these words:

*God, our Father, I offer You my day.
I offer You my prayers, thoughts, words,
actions, joys, and sufferings
in union with Your Son Jesus' Heart,
Who continues to offer Himself in the Eucharist
for the salvation of the world.
May the Holy Spirit, Who guided Jesus,
be my guide and my strength today
so that I may witness to Your love.
With Mary, the mother of our Lord and of the Church,
I pray especially for this month's intentions
as proposed by the Holy Father.*

In this prayer, with its deep Trinitarian content, we discover the essential elements of the spiritual attitude the AP proposes. We offer the Father all that we are and do, and our life takes on a value of salvation for others not through our merits but because we unite ourselves to Jesus, who continues to offer himself in the Eucharist for us.

This prayer, said every morning, is an act of will which expresses our desire that the whole day be lived in tune with Jesus' life and attitude. Since we cannot do this on our own strength we implore the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit. We also invoke the help of Mary, our exemplary companion along the path of discipleship. If this prayer is well

assimilated, it is enough to discover and understand the elements of the spiritual proposal of the AP.

In the service of others

The daily offering leads to the indispensable practice which reflects the authenticity of our offering: service and solidarity towards our brothers. "Prayer and Service", the motto of the AP, sums up our vocation. If we sincerely offer our lives to the Father, we place ourselves in line with Jesus who became a servant for us. We will be authentic servants insofar as how truly our lives become "eucharistic".

This is how Father Kolvenbach described it to the members and leaders of the AP in Rome in June 1994:

"There is a life-style, a spirituality, adopted by Christians who centre their lives in Christ: They become, in every daily detail, an extension of Christ's love for the Father and this love overflow in service to the world's little ones" (Prayer & Service, 1995, 1, p. 42).

He specified this same idea in September 1995 to the members of the AP gathered in Valladolid:

"The mystery of the Eucharist involves the whole of Christian life, not only our acts of piety and devotion but, even more, all the activities which tend to promote justice in the name of the Gospel and are necessary for our participation in the Lord's Supper. Our faith in the Eucharist would be irrelevant if it were not fulfilled in charity which fights injustices and tries to transform the unjust structures of human society (...) In our lives we cannot separate what Jesus united: the celebration of his Last Supper and the washing of the feet" (Prayer & Service 2007, 1, p. 17).

Summing up what I have said so far: when we propose the AP, we propose living like Jesus, in his style, with his Heart. We propose a way of living our lives, starting with prayer and service, taking as ours the gaze and action of Jesus' Heart, which is the gaze and action of God for the poor, the abandoned, those who lack love, for all those who need it.

How is the AP spread?

The AP basically spreads its spirituality through the "monthly leaflets" with the Pope's intentions (The "breviaries of the poor" according to Father Kolvenbach), and the periodical "The Messenger of the Heart of Jesus". The web pages and various publications of the National Secretaries help the members of the AP to deepen their spirituality. Of course local and diocesan meetings, the Eucharist of the first Fridays and yearly appointments such as a National Meeting or a retreat, occupy an important place.

1. Who can be a part of the AP?

Everyone. Adults, young people, the healthy, the sick, single or married people, those separated... all are welcome, all can live this spirituality of the Heart of Jesus profitably. As I indicated in the introduction, the AP is a suitable tool for helping the spiritual life of all Christians.

Our proposal can be lived in an individual or community form. It is certainly helpful to live it in an established group of the AP with regular meetings. As this is not easy for many people, it is possible to belong to the AP without belonging to a group and one need only make the daily offering every morning and pray for the Pope's intentions.

In this way we join the millions of Christians throughout the world who live their faith with the help of the AP. This is why we insist that we are not really a Movement but an Association of the faithful, an ecclesial service. This service is also suitable for people who belong to Movements or other associations of the faithful which have their own spirituality. Nor is it necessary to register officially in the AP offices, though this is useful for receiving the material which nourishes this spirituality.

2. How can one belong to it?

There are different ways and degrees of belonging to the AP. One can belong in a more general or informal way taking on and living this spirituality in an individual form without ties with other members or local centres.

Those who are registered as members of a local centre and connected with the Diocesan or National Centre of the AP, thus receiving some of our publications, develop a closer link. The people who form specific groups of the AP, with meetings and practices in common, have a third degree of belonging. The fourth degree of belonging refers to those in charge of or promoters of the AP, and those who have chosen to make a special Consecration to the Heart of Jesus within the AP. Parallel to the third way given here, though designed in particular for children and young people, there is the EYM.

The Eucharistic Youth Movement

The Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM) is the children and young people's branch of the AP. It grew out of the renewal of the old Eucharistic Crusade and is based on the same spirituality as the AP. But, unlike the AP, in order to work with children and young people the EYM is a Movement as such, with its own structures and specific directives. To ensure its objectives it takes care of the evolutive process of its components.

We could define it as a Church movement which aims at training children and young people in their Christian life and inviting them to live in Jesus' style. Its methodology is based on forming communities with a clear ecclesial awareness; living prayer, the Eucharist, the Word of God and discernment, the young people are led to a life of service, attentive to the needs of the present-day world. It is present in 34 countries in the five continents. The great utility and efficacy of the EYM in the Christian training of children and young people has been proved.

Here are some texts of the EYM in the world:

We are children, adolescents and young people, boys and girls, called by Jesus and brought together by the Apostleship of Prayer (...) who want to tell the world that our youthful joy stems from encountering God, from disinterested love, from looking at our history with hope, from Jesus' plan which fills us with enthusiasm and moves us to fulfill it. (From the Latin-American Handbook of the EYM, 2006).

E Eucharistic. We celebrate the Eucharistic Jesus, who is the centre of what we do, in every Mass and in our whole life. Our actions have their meaning in Jesus, as they manifest his love among the neediest people.

Y Youth. Jesus renews our lives, our hearts, making us "as children". He animates us with joy in our task. We belong to the Lord. We are the pilgrim Church, which collaborates in the building of the Kingdom.

M Movement. We are a community in action, oriented towards service to our brothers, continuing Jesus' sacrifice: "...here I am among you as one who serves" (Lk 22:27). (From the EYM of Chile, 2007).

Other recommended practices

1. The 12 promises and the First Fridays

At a time hard to place precisely, but after Saint Margaret Mary's death in 1690, some of her followers selected several promises made by Jesus from her writings. They drew up a list containing 11 promises which circulated in a restricted form for many years. It was only in 1869 that Father Franciosi, S.J. "discovered" what he called "the great promise" in Margaret's writings and added it to the list as number 12.

These gained world-wide popularity after 1882 when a devoted merchant from Dayton, Ohio, USA, Philip A. Kemper, changed their wording, shortened them and began to print and circulate hundreds of thousands of copies in various languages. It is important to realize that these promises do not appear in this form in Saint Margaret Mary's writings, which also contain many other promises. They have their value but we risk remaining only with them, thus impoverishing the theological content of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, reducing it to an "interested" spirituality in function of what I want to receive.

Let us now observe this last "great promise":

"One Friday, during holy communion, he spoke these words to his unworthy servant, if she is not mistaken: "I promise you, in the overflowing of the mercy of my Heart, that his omnipotent love will grant all those who take communion on nine first Fridays of the months consecutively the grace of final repentance, they will not die in my disfavour, nor without receiving the sacraments; my Heart will be their safe haven in their last moments" (Margaret Mary Alacoque, Letter 86, May 1688).

This recommendation follows the lines of Jesus' own Eucharistic catechesis in John's Gospel: "Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood will have eternal life" (6:54). It's intention is to situate the value of the Eucharist in a Christian's life, both for his earthly life and for his eternal life. The choice of a definite day answers to a pastoral pedagogy which remembers Good Friday, the day on which Jesus dies for our salvation, every month.

To have a better understanding of the scope of the proposal of the First Fridays we must enter into the theological and ecclesial atmosphere of the period. Jansenism, a rigid and puritan doctrine which exacted spotless conduct in order to accede to salvation, predominated widely. It preached that Jesus died only for the few elected, the great masses remaining condemned. God was a judge who must be more feared than loved, and the

common people, convinced of their sinfulness lived in constant terror of condemnation. Normal faithful could not approach communion except on given occasions, and only after accomplishing an exigent list of conditions. Jansenism was condemned by the Church in 1653, twenty years before the apparitions to Saint Margaret Mary, however its influence lasted (in fact a new condemnation proved necessary in 1715). This may explain the fact that this "Great promise" was strangely silent for so many years.

Jesus' words to Margaret Mary appeared at that time a great novelty for two reasons. In the first place, it opened a way to salvation for all people, remembering that the Lord wants everyone to be saved (see 1Tm 2:3). Jesus stresses to Margaret Mary the "overflowing of the mercy of his Heart", which in fact wishes to open the gates of heaven to all people. The invitation to the First Fridays was a way of saying that we must not fear perdition, because the simple gesture of taking communion for nine consecutive months is a symbol of the gift of salvation and of the trust owed to his Heart. The emphasis was not on a mathematical God, who gives marks, requires results, punishes those who did not achieve them; but the contrary: the simplicity and accessibility of salvation. This proposal represented overcoming jansenist rigidity and offered relief for anguished and fearful Christians.

Following a simple path they met a God with an open Heart, absolutely ready to give eternal life to all people. Living these Fridays of communion was and continues being a symbol which reminds us of the unlimited love which keeps the door of his Heart and of eternal life open to his sons.

The second novelty stems from the fact that it was an invitation to take communion far more frequently than what was customary at the time. Once a month was far more usual. Jesus, in "the overflowing of his mercy" wanted his faithful to remain closer to the eucharistic banquet. Today we must understand the devotion to the First Fridays as a symbol of his Heart's desire to nourish our lives with the Eucharist (today, certainly, more than once a month!). And he also invites us, once a month at least, to concentrate our gaze in a special way on his Heart's love for us.

On various occasions Pope John Paul II urged us to intensify and at the same time renew our practice of the first Fridays of the month. I quote his words to the Secretaries of the AP from all over the world, gathered in Rome in 1985:

"Let you continue to recommend with growing and renewed insistence, the extension of the pious practice of the "First Fridays" since in it the faithful person who is reconciled with God, with the Church and with our brothers through the Sacrament of Penance, becomes united with the Heart of Jesus, nourishing himself with the Sacrament of the Eucharist and participating in its attitude of offering and reparation".

To conclude, today we must appreciate the practice of the First Fridays basically for its symbolic rather than its juridical value. It is a symbol of the Father's universal desire for salvation, and of Jesus' invitation to centre our lives on the Eucharist. We would betray his spirit if we understood it as a kind of juridical mechanism which guarantees us eternal life. Salvation always comes through grace, one cannot "buy" it in this way. A person who approaches Jesus during these nine months experiences approaching the Lord inwardly and this places him on the path to salvation.

2. Personal, family, community, consecration

The AP invites us to consecrate ourselves to the Heart of Jesus, to turn our lives into an offering to the Father, to become far more closely united to the Son's surrender of love. Some people prefer to speak of consecrating oneself to the Father, through the Heart of Jesus. It is a personal, family or community offering, through which we freely choose to become more closely bound to the Heart of Christ and thus share in his life and love for us in a far closer way. Basically it is simply the renewal of our baptismal consecration to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Why consecrate ourselves, if we have already been consecrated through baptism?

Because it is one more symbol which helps us to live our faith and adherence to Jesus. In a world which does not value definitive commitments, in an egoistic and narcissistic society, we choose a personal or community alliance with the Heart of Jesus. It helps us to centre our own hearts, it reopens the source of his Heart, it is a useful testimony for others to see that there are Christians who, in the midst of the world, consecrate their lives to God. If we understand it correctly, the consecration the AP proposes is a valid instrument for indicating a relationship of greater love for the Lord and making a public gesture for Christians who want to take their life of faith more seriously.

What Pope Pius XII said in his day is still valid now:

It seems to us that Jesus descends among you and says to those who still doubt: "Surrender your heart to me", your whole heart, forever. I need people who aspire at total surrender of self, while remaining in the midst of the uproar of the world. I need heroic young people, innocent children, faithful spouses, pure young people...

When making the consecration we commit ourselves to:

Renew our baptismal commitment to be saints, to be always faithful to Jesus Christ and to his Gospel: "Reproduce in your hearts the sanctity of Jesus' Heart" (John Paul II, 1979).

Offer our lives each day in union and communion with the sentiments of Christ's Heart. "In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus..." (Ph 2:5).

Live with a eucharistic attitude: in an attitude of service to others. For this we need frequent participation in the Mass, possibly more than once a week.

Be an apostle of the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus.

How does one consecrate oneself to the Heart of Jesus?

A preliminary preparation is essential: As long as a person is not prepared to give everything, he must pray insistently, "asking for what I wish", in the humble attitude Saint Augustine speaks of. "Give me, Lord, what you ask of me and ask me what you wish". The preparation can consist in a Consecration Course or Retreat, in going to Mass during nine first Fridays of the month with the intention of uniting one's heart to Jesus', in suitable reading, in sacramental confession, etc.

Once the person is prepared, a significant date is chosen and in the frame of the Eucharist the consecration takes place through an established formula (the AP handbooks offer various models) or one written by the person or group involved. During the Eucharist the formula is generally pronounced before the offertory or before receiving communion.

I quote some words of Saint Alberto Hurtado (a Chilean Jesuit who died in 1952 and was canonized two years ago by Benedict XVI) spoken to the members of the AP:

Words of Saint Alberto Hurtado

May this consecration, brothers, not be one more formula added to others; may it not be a prayer to increase pious practices. No, please, may it not be that the sense of it (...) The consecration is the surrender of our whole life, of our desiring, being and possessing Christ. Your consecration will signify your participation in everything in which Christ participated, loving what Christ loved, hating what Christ hated... and this translates into this sublime formula: in my living now as Christ would live if he were in my place.

True devotion does not only consist in seeking God in heaven or Christ in the Eucharist but also in seeing him and serving him in the person of each of our brothers.

3. Reparation

This theme deserves an in-depth study and a theological penetration of its precise meaning. I will limit myself to outlining a few ideas and collecting a few authorized texts which help clarify certain aspects.

Reparation is basically the Christian's participation in Jesus Christ's redeeming love and in his lot in the world, starting from the desire to be like him. It is sharing in the Lord's lot which eliminates the sin of the world.

Reparation for our own sins and those of others consists primarily in becoming a faithful, obedient and loving participant in the Lord's lot, accepting the manifestation of sin in the world: slavery, darkness, persecution, remoteness of God, death (Teologia del Cuore di Cristo, Karl Rahner, Edizioni AdP, Italia, 1995, p. 78).

It is Christ who really makes reparation to the Father, offering his life for our sins. He is by our side as mediator, and this is why we can participate in this reparation, but only in him and with him.

For Pope John Paul II reparation is linked to the theme of sanctity, and he describes it as "apostolic cooperation in the salvation of the world" (see Prayer & Service 1999, 4, p. 313).

Reparation begins through my own heart, with my personal conversion. With a life of sanctity we cooperate in the redemption.

Karl Rahner says that we make reparation through our own lives and also our own deaths. In a sacrificial love like that of Jesus, who knew how to give himself up:

In the prayer of reparation we tell him that we wish, through our life and our death, to truly participate with his grace in the sacrifice he offered his Divine Father as our eternal and supreme priest, in the sacrificial love of his Heart which was obedient unto death (op. cit., p. 80).

In other words, reparation follows the same lines as our daily Offering, through which we offer our lives to "help" the Lord in his work of redemption. We unite our sufferings and all our life to his reparatory sufferings for the sins of the world. We must be careful when formulating the idea of consoling the Lord in his agony in the garden and relieving his passion, of sharing in his pain over the sin and ingratitude of the world which received his love. This can be misunderstood and cause confusion. With our prayer we do not try to be present at the moment of Jesus' passion, to give him relief, since this moment is already in the past. In prayer we always turn to Christ in Glory, who already lived his passion. We can and must contemplate the Lord's passion in our prayer, but this does not constitute actively consoling

Christ who "is suffering his passion", as if we were eliminating the time which has gone by from then to now. It is theologically complex, and contrary to common logic, to maintain that our present prayer can give relief to suffering which occurred two thousand years ago, as if it had retroactive efficacy.

It is another thing to consider that Jesus is pleased that we love him, as is characteristic of all loving people, and that he asks for our love. The risen Jesus continues to be a true man, with a human heart which suffers from rebuffs. Our prayer can be an answer to what can be interpreted as his "plea for unrequited love", without dramatizing it. It is the idea that we meet in Jesus' words to Saint Margaret Mary about his Heart which loved human beings so greatly and which only received ingratitude and contempt. We can see this longing of his Heart in Jn 21:15-19, when, by the side of the lake, he asked: "Simon son of John, do you love me?". And also in his humble supplication to the Apostles before dying:

"Remain in my love" (Jn 15:9). The scene of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem which did not know how to receive his love, in Lk 13:34-35, also reveals this very human dimension of his Heart. Understood in this way, a prayer of reparation is the answer to his invitation to love him, and it pleases him that we tell him so.

The actual content of our "holy hour of reparation" will also be the contemplation of the Lord's sufferings and passion, his surrender to death. We do this "not to console him because he is suffering", but with the intention of identifying our own life with his, through our own suffering. We will ask him for the gift of feeling with his Heart, suffering the sadness which he feels today for the suffering people of today. For this is why we practise acts of reparation with Christ and in Christ. We will ask him for the gift of feeling with his Heart, that he may mould our own heart and make it capable of loving as he loved us.

Thus reparation is another way to express – along with the daily Offering - the desire to offer our lives to the Lord in order to collaborate, with him and in him, in the redemption. If this is the case, what kind of action or what kind of collaboration does the authentic reparatory spirit specific to our spirituality ask of us?

Christ as Head of the Church lived sadness and consolation during his earthly life, and this continues in what has occurred and what will occur in all the members of his body throughout history.

We must ask ourselves where Jesus is suffering today, and which of his sadnesses we can alleviate. It is not difficult to discover that his Heart is suffering today in the pain of his poor brothers and sisters, in the sick and the outcast of this world. His passion continues in them. Our spirituality leads us to serve him and console him through works of solidarity and justice.

This is what our Director General said in 1995 in Valladolid:

"In this time of hatred and violence, of injustice and discrimination, the reparation due to the Lord is not authentic if it does not integrate the sense of the poor, the promotion of justice, love for the smallest ones, respect for life" (A most pleasant Mission).

The passion of Christ's Heart for the weak and underprivileged is central to Christianity. In order to really follow Christ and to be true Christians, we must be united with Christ in his service to the smallest ones, as a concrete gesture of his love for the Father. We must form communities of solidarity with the poor precisely because of Christ's preferential love for them (Prayer & Service, 2007, 1, p. 16).

Paraphrasing prophet Isaiah, we can understand what reparation is agreeable to the Lord:

*Is that the sort of fast that pleases me,
A truly penitential day?
Hanging your head like a reed,
Lying down on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call fasting
A day acceptable to the Yahweh?
This the sort of fast that pleases me:
It is the Lord Yahweh who speaks –
To break unjust fetters,
And undo the thongs of the yoke,
To let the oppressed go free,
And break every yoke,
To share your bread with the hungry,
And shelter the homeless poor,
To clothe the man you see to be naked,
And not turn from your own kin.
(Isaiah 58:5-7)*

The holy hour of reparation must move us to "actions of reparation", actions to help others, which are what really interest and please Jesus.

Along these same lines we have John Paul II's well-known words, quoted by Benedict XVI, with which I will end this theme:

"In this way – and this is the true reparation required by the Saviour's Heart – over the ruins accumulated through hatred and violence it will be possible to build the civilization of the Heart of Christ" (Benedict XVI quoting John Paul II, in a letter to Father Kolvenbach, May 15th 2006).

Conclusion

We can see that the practice of our AP spirituality is within reach for Christians today. Starting from their concrete reality it challenges them to live on a path of both simple and profound union with Christ which leads them to a life of prayer and service.

In a time of disorientation and of searching for meaning, the proposal of the AP gives order to life, it gives a direction and a goal. Those who have little time can give coherence to their excessively agitated lives. Those who are sick and have too much time can discover that their pain can be offered to God. The young will feel able to orient their lives cultivating friendship with Christ, who invites them to surrender their hearts to him.

In a time of indifference and lack of care for each other, we find in the AP a spirituality of God's tenderness for us. We are received in the open Heart of the Savior who teaches us to share his kindness with our brothers and sisters. In the midst of so much loneliness, the AP unites us to millions of others in ecclesial communion, sharing Christ's mission.

The Apostleship of Prayer is Jesus himself. The admired Jesus, the welcomed Jesus, the followed Jesus, the loved Jesus. Jesus of the open Heart. In these simple practices we can find a way of entering into intimacy with him, of being transformed through him for the service of our neighbors.

We can reliably state that the Apostleship of Prayer is truly "a path of holiness for Christians of the Third Millennium".

Claudio Barriga, S.J.