

## The Apostleship of Prayer An apostolic way of life

*(A proposal from the Apostleship of Prayer  
to those who follow Ignatian spirituality)*



*"I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God,  
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy, and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship."  
(Romans 12:1)*

The Apostleship of Prayer (AP) offers us a simple and profound way to live the Eucharistic, ecclesial and missionary dimensions of our Ignatian spirituality. Its practices teach us to live open to the Holy Spirit and to respond to the call of the Eternal King, who invites us to collaborate with him in his mission.

Born in 1844 in an Ignatian milieu among young Jesuits in Southern France, the AP comes as a spiritual answer to the missionary thrust of those young men at a time when they had to stay at home studying. How could they help the Church and those far-away missionaries right now, not only in the future? How could their simple study-focused lives be useful to the work of spreading the Gospel in those frontiers of faith? The AP taught them to become apostles through prayer and through the daily offering of their lives. Their everyday chores, their prayers, their desires, even their sufferings and limitations, were all useful to the Church when connected to Jesus. They learned that their whole life, down to its smallest details, was in itself a mission. If it was all done for Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus' way, that would be their best contribution to the mission of the whole Church. As simple as that. And as great as that. All for Jesus. Sanctify the whole day. *To love and to serve in all things* [Sp Ex 233].

Apostleship of Prayer as such is not defined as a Church movement among other movements or as one spirituality among other spiritualities. It does not replace our community, be it CLC or any other. It is rather *a spirit* we are invited to live, or a *spiritual way*, useful to all Christians, of all movements and of all spiritualities, especially those who are inspired by the Ignatian Exercises. It teaches a simple and yet profound way for all the faithful of any age, culture or social condition, to put the whole day and all they do in God's hands and to the service of the Church. The AP is a practical way that helps us be *contemplative in action*.

The AP counts on an estimated 40 million followers around the world, in more than 70 countries, in all the continents. Its youth branch, the Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM), is present in over 50 countries, inviting children and young people to “live the lifestyle of Jesus”.

### **How does this work?**

The basic practices of the AP are two: the daily Offering of your life to the Father, usually done in the morning, and praying for the Pope’s monthly intentions.

Both are lived in relation to the Eucharist and help us prolong it throughout the day. The first one reproduces in your daily life the Eucharistic dynamic of offering your life with Christ to the Father. The second is a school of prayer, for it leads you to pray and live like Jesus, to the service of all humanity. It is a prayer that inserts you in the great mission of the Church as the Body of Christ on earth, nourished by his sacramental Body.

### **How do I offer myself?**

As you begin your day, you make a prayer of offering from your heart, done in the spirit of the *Suscipe (Take Lord, and receive...)*, the last prayer of the Spiritual Exercises [234]. In your own words, by this prayer or by means of a standard Daily Offering prayer, you tell the Lord that you want to do everything in him and with him. The important thing is to do it from your own heart, in union with Jesus’ Heart, willing to collaborate with him in his mission. With this prayer you offer yourself to the Father and ask that every moment be united to the perfect offering of Jesus that is celebrated in the Mass. You are thus making yourself open to the Spirit, responding to his call in every little thing and in all dimensions of your life, with the same inner freedom Jesus lived in his own Heart.

At the end of the day, an evening prayer looks back on the offering done in the morning. Here you become aware of what the Lord has done during the day with what you offered him earlier. You do this “examen” or Evening Review in the spirit of the Contemplation to attain love [Sp Ex 230-237]. Both practices will teach you *not to be deaf to his call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish his most holy will* [Sp Ex 91].

### **How will I be able to live out this radical offering?**

The Daily Offering prayer is mainly a big and generous *desire*, an act of the will. We tell the Lord how we want to live this new day, *desiring and choosing only what is more conducive to the end for which we are created* [Sp Ex 23]. Since we are always susceptible to our weaknesses, we cannot guarantee the results. Yet through this prayer of offering we can consciously express our *desire* to unite our lives with Jesus’ life, to place our hearts into his

*Perhaps the daily exercise of this offering will make me aware of a deep lack of consistency, and open the way for my inner transformation. Only the Lord can work this transformation in me. The offering prayer, done daily with a humble spirit, is a way to realize that only God is the holy one, the just, and that we are his creatures always needy of his love. So let us desire, ask, plea for his intervention. And let us pray with confidence, putting our hope in him alone, and wait.*

Heart. Remember, the Kingdom of God comes to us as a gift, not as a fruit of our personal efforts. We are asking for this gift, may the Holy Spirit give us the grace to live out this offering.

### **Why is this a Eucharist way?**

Christ's presence in the Eucharist is above all and in the first place a gift, capable of transforming our weakness. We respond by offering our humble lives in union with the life Jesus offered to his Father. We put ourselves in his hands, for him to do the miracle. Just as a piece of bread and a sip of wine can become God's living presence for us, so are we transformed into his presence for others.

The receiving and the offering that goes on in our hearts, just as it goes on in Jesus' Heart, is a Eucharistic dynamic. This dynamic is unfolded during the day in the span that goes from my early morning offering to the evening review, making the Eucharist my life-program. Living the AP is a way to live the Eucharist. It is a way to live like Jesus did. "Do this in memory of me." Do what? Give out your life to others. Live your whole life in a Eucharistic way.

### **How about the ecclesial dimension, our *Sentire cum Ecclesia*?**

We live out this offering as apostles through prayer and service. Our whole life of everyday chores is the field for our collaboration with Christ, in his Church. I offer my whole life joining it to what the Church does.

Each month the Holy Father proposes two of his main concerns, asking people to join him in prayer. As a concrete expression of our union and support to the worldwide mission of the Church, the AP invites us to pray for intentions of the Pope. With them we grow in our sense of universality, looking with the Holy Trinity at "the great capacity and circuit of the world, in which are so many and such different people", as in the Exercise's contemplation of the Incarnation [103]. The AP teaches us to configure our whole lives by the Ignatian principle of service to the Church.

**This is basically what the AP is all about.** As you see, living the AP does not replace or hinder any of our Ignatian community's spiritual practices, rather it stems from them and invites us to open a worldwide window for Church service, in spiritual communion with millions of others. The practice of the AP will help us put Jesus into everything we do and to live in availability to the Spirit. It is also a daily reminder so as to keep alive the graces of the Spiritual Exercises.

### **So, how can I be part of the AP?**

No registration, no groups, no fees, no special meetings are required. To follow this AP way of life in your own personal spirituality is enough. That already makes you part of the huge AP family in the world. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended to have your name registered in the local AP National office. Keeping in touch with the people in charge of the AP in your country, receiving their news, publications or invitations will help you stay tuned.

Let me now propose to you a practical way to do this every day, connecting the Daily Offering Prayer with our evening Examen. Starting from here, you can develop your own ritual or approach for your daily prayer and your own way to be part of the Apostleship of Prayer.

*(Note: the following method of prayer can be explained and distributed separately from this first part of the text)*

## A prayer of the heart

### Ten minutes and ten steps in the morning

1. I choose the right place and, a few steps before “entering” that place, I take three seconds to prepare my heart for prayer.
2. I take my praying position, I calm myself, I breathe deeply a few times.
3. With the sign of the cross, I open my heart to the loving presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
4. I hear the trumpets (the Great King has given order that when his son the prince or his daughter the princess come into his presence, the trumpets may sound – I am free to choose another symbol to make me aware of the Father’s joy to receive me).
5. Before the Lord, I open my heart to the new day: How am I this morning? (I come to prayer just as I am, be it cheerful or weary, happy or sad, worried or full of hope, as a sinner or as a saint... I come as me.)
6. I open my heart to the Word of the Lord: I choose a reading (maybe from today’s liturgy), I reflect on it, I let it work in me, I dialogue with the Lord.
7. I open my heart to offer: I go over what I will be doing today and ask Jesus to dwell in my heart all day. With my hands open, I offer this day to the Father with an Offering Prayer or using my own words.
8. I open my heart to the mission: I wish to collaborate today with Christ’s mission, from what I am, how I am, where I am. I join my life and my prayer to the whole Church’s mission and prayer through the two monthly intentions the Holy Father presents us:  
  
[for this month’s prayer intentions – see [www.apostleshipofprayer.net](http://www.apostleshipofprayer.net) ]
9. I open my heart to Mary, the open-hearted. I ask her to accompany me this day.
10. I conclude by thanking the Lord for his kindness today, in the name of the F – S – HS.

### Two Offering Prayers:

*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.*

Take, Lord, and receive  
all my liberty, my memory,  
my intellect, and all my will –  
all that I have and possess.  
You gave it to me: to You, Lord, I return it!  
All is yours, dispose of it  
according to all your will.  
Give me your love and grace,  
for this is enough for me.

*A prayer inspired in the Ignatian Examen*

## **Ten minutes and ten steps by night (examen)**

*I prepare myself, I ask, I thank, I become aware, I trust.*

1. I choose the right place and, a few steps before “entering” that place, I prepare myself for prayer.
2. I become aware of being in the loving presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
3. I ask the Holy Spirit for the insight and strength that will make this examen a work of grace, guided by him, allowing me to see his action in me all along this day.
4. I look Jesus in the eyes and feel heartily received by his warm smile.
5. I look at my heart at the end of this day and tell the Lord how I feel.
6. I thank the Lord for the ways he opened my heart to his life, his joy and his peace in this day. I become aware of how the Lord has helped me during the day to offer him my life, each time I have felt united to his love, his peace, his gospel. He has been present in my life, granting me to be with him. (more important than checking what I did wrong, is seeing what he did right, and what we did together!).
7. In which ways have I been an obstacle to the Lord’s life in me? Some of my choices have not been of the good Spirit. I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love and respect for me, removes my heart’s burdens.
8. I look to the following day and, with the Lord, plan concretely how to live it in accord with his loving desire for my life. Putting all my hope in him alone, I anticipate my offering of a new day tomorrow.
9. Before going to bed, I feel Jesus’ loving hand on my head, blessing me for a good sleep.
10. I wink an eye at Mary, I put my life in her heart and conclude my prayer in the name of the F – S – HS.



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