

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

A Way to Sanctity for the Christian of the Third Millennium

“To pray is not to escape from history and the problems which it presents. On the contrary, it is to choose to face reality not on our own, but with the strength that comes from on high, the strength of truth and love which have their ultimate source in God. Faced with the treachery of evil, religious people can count on God, who absolutely wills what is good. They can pray to him to have the courage to face even the greatest difficulties with a sense of personal responsibility, never yielding to fatalism or impulsive reactions.” (John Paul II, Assisi, 2 January 2002)

Encouraged by these words of the Holy Father, the Apostleship of Prayer is ready to render with renewed zeal the service that has been entrusted to it to help Christians unite their prayers and their lives to the prayer and mission of the universal Church, of which the Holy Father's international and missionary intentions remind us each year.



THE DAILY OFFERING

So that our prayer and our lives be united with the prayer and mission of the universal Church, the Apostleship of Prayer proposes that each day begin with an offering of ourselves, of our joys and sufferings, of our successes and failures, for the salvation of the world. We make this offering in union with Jesus Christ under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By making it, we commit ourselves to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

A Trinitarian way of making the daily offering could be:

**God, our Father, I offer you my day.
I offer you my prayers, thoughts, words, actions and sufferings in union with your Son Jesus Christ, 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...**

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Experience shows that this act, both simple and profound, changes one's life. It would in fact be difficult to offer day after day all that we are and do, in union with Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the world, and persist in attitudes and thoughts which have little or no salutary value. Made with proper seriousness, the daily offering purifies our hearts, our thoughts and our outlook, making it possible to love and serve God in all things. The first person to be changed by the daily offering is oneself.

OUR LIFE BECOMES A PROJECT

Our life does not consist simply of a passage through time, of a test that we must pass. Rather our life is a project. We are here to contribute to the building of God's Kingdom through our positive acts. The daily offering helps us to discover how we can find, serve, touch and love God in all persons, in all things and in all the circumstances of our lives. The Apostleship of Prayer is called "to make its members conscious of the sanctifying and apostolic value of their daily work, perceived as a collaboration in the work of God, Creator and Redeemer, and of their sufferings, through which they are called to complete in their bodies what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ (Col 1, 24)" (cf. John Paul II, 1985).

OUR PRAYER GAINS A UNIVERSAL DIMENSION

We collaborate with Christ not only by our action. Christ himself invited us to intercede before the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest (Mt 9, 37). From its beginnings, the Apostleship of Prayer has called the faithful to a prayer of intercession for the problems of the universal Church, with particular attention to the needs of the missions. In this way it has created a profound communion of prayer among hundreds of millions of believers. Nothing less is expected in the future. The Holy Father esteems the strength of this Apostleship of Prayer so highly that he himself proposes a general and a missionary intention for each month. The Apostleship of Prayer welcomes them lovingly and makes them the object of its offering throughout the entire world.

THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING IN OUR HEARTS

Paul VI, in the letter that conveyed his approval of the post-conciliar statutes of the Apostleship of Prayer, suggested that more emphasis be placed on the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. I Co 3, 16; 6, 19) prays in them and gives witness to their adoption as children (cf Ga 4, 6; Rom 8, 15-16 and 26). Since then, the invocation to the Holy Spirit has become an integral part of the daily offering of millions of persons, happy to



know that the transformation the daily offering operates in them is the work of the Holy Spirit.

WITH A HEART SIMILAR TO THE HEART OF JESUS

"Make my heart like unto yours." This simple prayer expresses the deep desire the Lord incites in our hearts: to be able to love God and our brothers and sisters, like he has loved them. That this be realized, we must hearken to his words and contemplate his actions, as the Holy Father wrote on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Apostleship of Prayer: "The more one learns to inspire one's own prayer with the word of God, the more intimately that person is permeated with the sentiments of the heart of Christ." Devotion to the heart of Jesus has no other aim than to make us more like him, as trusting in the Father and attentive to others as he was himself. It is this state that the Holy Spirit strives to develop within us.

NOURISHED AND MOULDED BY CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

Union with Jesus Christ must be nourished and sustained by the sacramental life. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty, for cut off from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15, 5). In the Eucharist, it is the risen Christ who gives himself as food and drink to make us one with him and make it possible for us to reveal him to the world, in the words of John Paul II to the directors of the Apostleship of Prayer, "you must strive to form Christians that are shaped by the Eucharist, which gives them the strength to commit themselves generously to embrace all the dimensions of their own life in service of their brothers as the offered body of Christ and his blood which was shed." (cf Lk 22, 19ff) (John Paul II, 1985).

RECONCILED WITH HIM IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION



Recalling how the Holy Year was marked by an increased participation in the sacrament of reconciliation, the Holy Father invites the Church to be attentive to this side of pastoral work. The Apostleship of Prayer will follow this directive, since this sacrament helps to know Christ as the one in whom God shows us his compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself. (NMI 37)

FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

Like Mary, who gave herself fully and generously to the person and work of her Son, we also through our offering willingly make ourselves available to Jesus Christ for the advent of his Kingdom.

IN SUMMARY, THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

- ☩ proposes a way to sanctification
- ☩ through the daily offering
- ☩ that transforms our lives
- ☩ and unites us in a worldwide communion of prayer
- ☩ through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts
- ☩ and arouses in us the desire to have the same sentiments that were in the heart of Christ,
- ☩ so that, nourished and molded by him in the Eucharist
- ☩ and reconciled with him in the sacrament of Reconciliation,
- ☩ we become able to put ourselves totally and with all our heart at his disposition and
- ☩ at the disposition of his Church, following the example of Mary, for the coming of his Reign.

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