

# History of the Apostleship of Prayer

John L. Vessels, SJ

## Part One

The Apostleship of Prayer was born in a seminary at a time when in France most seminarians, most religious, all dreamed of being missionaries. It was a missionary period in the church, in fact the fruits of which the church today is still enjoying. Japan and some of the other countries of Asia were opening themselves to Christianity after centuries of having slammed the door on it. Africa had never really been evangelized until one hundred years ago, and young people all over Europe were on fire with this idea of being apostles of Jesus Christ, of being missionaries of Jesus Christ. Missionary activity and apostolic activity were one and the same; apostolic activity was a little bit broader in the sense that All the activities associated with spreading the message of Christ, where as the missionary word was going far away, going to another country, another land, another people, another culture and telling them about Jesus Christ.

This fire inflamed many young people: even the lay people regretted the fact that they could not be missionaries, and so they prayed for missionaries. The only way they could be associated with the missions was to pray for the missions. The Jesuits of the Toulouse Province had just taken on a new mission in southern India. The Jesuit Scholastics studied their philosophy and theology in the seminary at Vals. These young men had become so excited about hopefully being sent to India that they all wanted to qualify. Hence, they were all trying to learn as much about India as possible, believing that those who had prepared themselves well would be sent. So it was only a question of going to the library and finding all the material they could on India, culture, religions, languages, geography, history, etc. As it may so easily imagined, the more time they spent in studying about India, the less time was spent into studying their philosophy and their theology. And this was quite disturbing to their professors and lecturers. So much so that their spiritual father, Father Gautrelet exhorted them on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, 1844, to return to the study of philosopher and theology. He put it quite bluntly: "Your mission is not India, your mission is the classroom you're going to this afternoon! Your mission is philosophy or theology. Your mission is to PREPARE yourselves to be sent. The worst preparation for being a missionary is to do your own will and not the will of God. If you want to be a missionary, be a missionary today! Be a missionary in this seminary! Be a missionary by doing God's will TODAY!"

Then, Father Gautrelet continued: "I'll give you a practical suggestion as to what you might do to make yourself a missionary today a little more clearly and make sure that you are an authentic missionary today; When you get up in the morning you offer your day to God. You add one more prayer to your morning prayers. Let your first prayer be, 'God I give you this day; you gave it to me, I give it back. You have given me everything I am and everything I have. You have given me my mind, my body, my time, my energy, my health, my friends, my family, my faith, everything! And I want to give it back. I desire to make a return of love for love, everything I am and have, you have given them to me out of love and I desire to give it back out of love. I desire to use it as you would have me use it. So here it is, Lord. The program is already made, to certain extent: my study schedule, my work schedule, my recreation schedule. I just long to do your will in each of these activities, with each person who comes into my existence, any person whose existence I go into during these activities today. I want to be the instrument

of you peace and your love and your justice and your faith, your truth, your life!"

The young Jesuit Scholastics began to make this morning offering. In this prayer they found that they were really focusing on doing God's will rather than their own will in every little thing that they were doing during the day. As they began to take this prayer more seriously, and rearranged, modified, their prayer lives to a certain extent to where this was becoming an important focus of their prayerful attention to God, they noticed, immediately almost, that two other aspects of their prayer lives were being enriched and helped by this stress on a morning offering.

First realized that the Eucharist began to be so much richer. Mass began when they woke up in the morning and they said this offering, "Lord, I give you this day, to do with it what you want." Jesus lived in the hearts of each of them and they began to realize this, that the heart of each of them was a chapel where Jesus Christ celebrated. Jesus Christ lived in the heart of each of them and each of them was a chapel where Jesus celebrated continually the Eucharist and his sacrifice on Calvary, with the full collaboration of each one each morning.

When they went to the chapel after finishing their meditation, this was an ongoing prayer that they had already begun with the saying of the morning offering. The Eucharist in the chapel was a coming together in Jesus' name, not just for each of them but for the whole community. Thus there was a movement from individual prayer to community prayer, uniting with the prayer of the whole Church. Thus the Eucharistic attitude of sacrifice and offering with which the day had begun had reached its fullness, its prayerful peak in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the communion with Jesus, head and heart. They listened to the Word, learned what the head of this body wanted its members to do during the day or was doing through them and received the strength to act as Jesus.

## **Part Two**

### **EUCCHARISTIC LIVING**

This was Eucharistic. What they found out was that just as they were coming into the chapel, the mass had already begun in their hearts. Further, as they were leaving the chapel the mass continued into their everyday activities. The scholastics did not come to the chapel to eat the body of Christ or just to celebrate the prayer of Christ, they primarily wanted to LIVE the Eucharist; they came to the chapel to celebrate what Christ was doing in them together in order to go out and DO it together. Eucharistic living became, not primarily, receiving the Eucharist or celebrating the Eucharist but became primarily LIVING the Eucharist.

The morning offering was the first moment each day. The morning offering was not a prayer of the head or a prayer of the heart. The morning offering was and is primarily a prayer of the will. What do I want? What do I determine? What character do I give to this day with first act of the day, this first act of faith of the day? It is that everything today be motivated by faith and be an expression of faith.

There would be days that they would be so busy that they would not even think of God all day long and yet he was always there. He was always just beneath the surface because everything they were doing, they were doing with and for him. They were doing out of love and it was his life that was vitalizing, that was giving life to others through their activities.

This became the apostolic dimension of prayer. Prayer may not have been very long at

the beginning of the day, but it made the whole day into prayer, it made the whole day an exercise of faith, knowingly, because the will act that they had made at the beginning of the day was a knowing, was a will-full act, it was a knowledgeable act. They knew what they were doing and they wanted it, and that made everything they did a prayer as long as it was in harmony with this initial act of the day.

### **Part Three**

#### **EVENING EXAMEN**

This brought up the second prayer that was affected by this morning offering, in the sense that, when they came to the end of the day and made their evening review of the day, their prayer was enriched basically by shifting the point of attention from themselves as the centre of the day to God as the centre of the day.

So the question they would ask themselves in the evening was not "What did I do wrong today?" but rather "What has God done with the gift that I have given him at the beginning of the day?" God gave the day to me and I have given it back; now what has he done with the gift that he gave me, which he is totally in control of, totally in possession of? He is the owner of my day. I have given it to God. I have acknowledged his ownership of this day. I have lived my day supposedly as an instrument of his love, his peace and truth and justice. Now let me look back and see what has he done with me. I know it's good because God only does good things. I know it is holy, I know he has made this a holy day as God is holy. Where do I see holiness in this day? What was important to God? What was the most important thing in my life today that I can see was important for God?

Eventually they discovered that just as the Morning Offering, their own personal human prayer, was elevated to the sacramental and the divine level by the Eucharist, so too the evening examen, which was their way of becoming constantly more alert to what God was doing. They could just discern the pattern of God's activity; they could become much more fully aware of what God was doing; they could see; they could perceive the threads of the Spirit working, the pattern of the Spirit's relationship to each other, their values, their attitudes. They could see God at work in all of this.

### **Part Four**

#### **RECONCILIATION**

The scholastics flowed with this and also found that, as it became much easier over a period of time, they could harmonize with it. Furthermore, they discovered a sense of joy and worth from God's activity, by belonging to God and acknowledging and wanting to express their belonging to God. Well, obviously this evening examen was elevated to a sacrament level by the sacrament of reconciliation. They went to the sacrament of reconciliation not for the sins of yesterday; they went for the challenges of tomorrow, they went for the sins of tomorrow. They want to receive the sacramental grace, the divine aid, from the sacrament for those specific moments in their week or month or however long it would be before their next occasion for reconciliation. They knew that God was giving them the specific graces they would need to overcome their own selfishness, their own sensuality, their own fears, all which they were discovering.

When I said that each evening when they made their evening awareness examen it was

not so much to see what they did wrong as to see what God did right: this did not mean that they did not see what they did wrong. But it was now evident. They did not have to look for it and they did not have to feel bad about it. They just say it and this is what God wanted me to do today and I did not do it. "Well, I am sorry, Lord and I will pick up the slack tomorrow and be more faithful tomorrow. And knowing, or, perhaps, their faith telling them, that God was fully aware of the real serious defects in their characters, the weaknesses in their personalities, he would give them those specific graces that they would need for specific encounters and specific moments of crises, this was the attitude with which they received the sacrament of reconciliation.

So, then, it was around these four practices - two of them prayer practices, the morning offering and the evening examen and two of them sacramental practices, the Eucharist and reconciliation. It was around these four practices as a structure that they discovered an increased growth in the Spirit. It was a missionary growth, in the sense that they realized their mission was here, where they were, today. It was the desire to be the apostles of Jesus and to spread his message, not just in their own lives, in their classrooms, seminary halls and playgrounds, but also in the wider world around them.

## **Part Five**

### **APOSTLES OF PRAYER**

As these seminarians were all catechists, they were all, in one way or another, involved in spreading Christ's mission and this they did in the villages around the seminary. The Apostleship of Prayer would never have really begun historically, if they had not become apostles of prayer, if they had not gone out into the villages and gave the message of the Apostleship of Prayer to all these people in the villages - farmers, old people, young people, poor people. There were not many rich people among the Catholics of southern France in the rural areas at that time since this had been Huguenot territory. The message that the seminarians gave to the people was a simple message: You are precious to God just the way you are! No one so poor no one so old, so sick that he cannot offer his or her life to the Lord.

This became the exercise of their missionary vocation even while they were still seminarians: to go out and spread this message of self-value of everyone, their value to God. Once the people began to exercise these practices with their wills, with the simple little short but intense prayer of the will at the beginning of each day, giving themselves to the Lord, learning to come to the end of the day with a prayer of thanksgiving, looking back and remembering and reliving everything that God had done in them and with them that day both for their own benefit and through them for the benefit of others.

These missionaries of prayer, spreading this word, saw the value of a certain apostolic dimension of their own prayer life put into words, formulated into practices which they could teach others - children, old people, sick, prisoners. Each one of these scholastics went to a different sector of society, exercised a ministry to prisoners, a ministry to the sick, a ministry to the old, a ministry to the young, to the children, to the youth, to the business man, to fellow religious. All of these different ministries circulated around these four practices of offering and examen, Eucharist and reconciliation.

Getting to know these people, these simple farmers of southern France and their families, these villagers, these small rural communities, the seminarians realized how much these people prayed for the missionaries and so they pointed out to the people that they, too had

a mission, not just to pray for the missionaries on the other side of the world, but to be missionaries, to do Mission in their own neighborhoods, in their own communities and families, in the context of their own daily lives. The morning offering turned every thing they did that day, everything they thought, every thing they said, into instruments of building the Kingdom. They were missionaries, they were fulfilling their mission each day. This was their mission: to wash those dirty clothes, to take care of those children, to cook those meals, to move those stones out of the fields, to plough those fields, to harvest that crop. Every single moment of their lives was as valuable and as useful to God for the building of his kingdom as that of any president or priest or king or bishop, or whoever, wherever.

So the people began to exercise these practices and grow in their own sense of importance to God. Not because of anything that they themselves were or were doing, or rather, nothing that they were doing had value of itself so much as the fact that because they were children of God and because God was pleased to accept their sacrifices and the offering of their activities. Their hearts and their minds were open to God, seeking each day to be guided more clearly and more authentically by him.

## **Part Six**

### **ATTITUDE OF FAITH AND PRAYER**

It was by this attitude of prayer, this attitude of faith with which they began each day, by this will-act at the beginning of each day, tuning themselves just as Christ tuned himself to the Father each morning of his earthly existence and still does eternally, by turning himself to God at the beginning of the day and then, not trying to understand, not really concentrating on it consciously during the day but simply going through one's day giving one's energies and one's time completely to the task at hand, especially to the persons encountered at the tasks at hand, that God can do his will in the life of each person, in the heart of each person, in the mind of each person, in the spirit of each person, both the doer, the pray-er and those with whom that doer and pray-er comes in contact. This is LIVING the Eucharist.

Of course these people learned also how the seminarians valued their Eucharist and thereby their own Eucharist became valuable to them, whether it was weekly, monthly or only two or three times a year. (We must remember how much people live on the Eucharist even if they can attend it only three or four times a year or once a month. They do not think of it as just three or four times a year, or once a month activity; they live, they celebrate the Eucharist every day.) They celebrate the Eucharist every day in the morning Offering, this offering of themselves, this priestly act, at the beginning of each day. If the priest only comes to their village once a year or once a month, they bring the DAILY offerings that they offerings that they have made as individuals, as families and as community to the altar knowing this is the moment at which publicly assumes and prays with them and makes their offering to the Father, blending it with his own.

So as it spread across southern France because, just as the seminarians told them about it and taught them these pricks and the value of these practices which they themselves had learned in practice, so these villagers became missionaries of prayer: they taught others to pray in this way. They told their families in other places, their friends in other places, and they thereby became missionaries of prayer, the Apostleship of Prayer. Thus was the Apostleship of Prayer born. These apostles of prayer were missionaries through prayer and they taught others to be missionaries, to build the kingdom of God beginning

with prayer.

## **Part Seven**

### **APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER SPREADS AROUND THE WORLD**

The Apostleship of Prayer waxed and waned in its early years for want of organization. When Father Gautrelet, SJ, the founding father realized that he was not going to be the one to organize it any further than just as it was in the seminary during those first years, he invited Father Ramière to do something about the organization.

Gautrelet had perceived the inseparable union between head and heart of Christ, between Word and Bread, (which is the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist); that is, as the head of the body gives directives to the members of the body, however insignificant and unimportant they may appear to be to themselves and to others around them, the head using the word to direct the body in the activities and the services of the day, so the heart communicates the love with which everything is to be done. It is not what we do that is important, it is how we do it, with love communicating love, not our own love only but the love of Christ from the Heart of Christ. So these four elements of head and heart, word and bread had been perceived as important in the Apostleship of Prayer by Gautrelet.

Ramière assumed not only the missionary character of this prayer movement that was slowly moving across France and Europe, but also the deep devotion, the deep heartfelt, passionate affectionate relationship to Jesus as members of his body. He developed this very thoroughly both in his book but also in the magazine that he began to publish, the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, in Toulouse. This publication grew into a network, a whole family of Messengers all around the world. It was published in many different languages.

This devotion, as an expression of faith, included the Morning Offering, the reception of the Eucharist, the evening Examen, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These all were formulated in acts of consecration to the Heart of Jesus or to the Father through the heart of Jesus and the heart of Mary. This personal consecration led to family consecration, to city consecration, to nation consecration. The people were being called to being instruments of God in the building up of the Kingdom. So, one hundred and twenty years before Vatican II, people who embarked on the Apostleship of Prayer, became missionaries of prayer, missionaries of the Eucharist, missionaries of the apostolic dimension of prayer in the work of building up the Kingdom of God.

These missionaries did not even know what baptismal priesthood meant. They did not think of themselves as priests; they were living it. This living their priesthood spread all around the world, and the Messengers of the Sacred Heart were the instruments of giving the on-going encouragement, formation and orientation which it needed. Very quickly it spread all round the world because the Society of Jesus during the centuries had seeded the life style of Ignatian spirituality, the simple prayer practices of Ignatius. The simple prayer practices that produced a spirit of oblation had been planted in the hearts of people all round the world. The Society of Jesus from its very beginning had been a missionary organization and still is.

## Part Eight

### THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The Spiritual Exercises in one form or another had reached into the homes and hearts of, I cannot say most Catholics around the world, but certainly into the hearts and homes of many Catholics around the world because the Jesuit organization had spread itself around the world in missionary work, in parishes and schools especially but also with different kinds of research centers, spirituality centers and magazines. Long before the plethora of magazines we have now, the Catholic press was largely in the hands of the Jesuits and they were largely an instrument of the Exercises to one extent or another.

Ignatius had designed the Exercise to be given to the elite so as to form leaders, to convert and confirm leadership, Catholic leadership, lay leadership, political leadership in all areas, especially in the school of Jesus with his attitude of returning love to Love, communicating the life of the Father, his whole life being an oblation to the Father to the Father's will. The Exercises had, and still have, as their objective to bring people to this attitude of living one's life at the service of the Lord and the building of the kingdom, to do the Father's will day to day.

### A SCHOOL OF PRAYER

St. Ignatius, himself, not only recognized but also believed the fact that large numbers of simple people, who were only looking for a little bit of religious instruction and a great deal of inner peace, would find both in some simple form from the Exercises: He called it the Eighteenth Annotation of the Exercises. And his insight was that it would not necessarily be Jesuits who would direct this form of the Exercises but rather that, as Jesuits or others allied with them, took large numbers of people through some of the simple Exercises that the people themselves would become so enthusiastic that they in turn would turn around and give them or lead others through this same little simple school of prayer.

One of the earliest successful mass apostolates of the Jesuits was in Parma where Laynez and Faber successfully, if we can believe history, converted the whole town to a renewed Christian way of life. And they did it, not by their own preaching, they did it by the simple form of group Exercises in the simple exercises of prayer. What Ignatius wanted was to bring these people back to confession, to get them to clean up their lives, to recognize the evil that they were doing and to recognize the attitudes in their daily life style that explained the evil, to repent of it and to get back to the Eucharist. He desired that they be oriented in such a way that they would be left, somehow or other with a regular practice of communion and a somewhat regular practice of the sacrament of confession. The prayer of the Exercise is a prayer of the WILL: What do I want, what is the grace that I ask for? I know that it is God alone who can give it to me. I know that it is by the power of God alone that I can reform my life and live y life according to his will, to do his will and to be an instrument of his will.

**The Principle and Foundation** was the first exercise: "Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God and save his soul and use everything else on the face of the earth to attain this end; and he becomes indifferent to his own long life or short life, health or bad health of whatever in order to do what God wants him to do and be what God wants him to be and allow God to work his will in him."

This is the beginning of the Exercises and it builds up beautifully through the different week, the different phases of the Exercises to the moment at which at the very end when one finds God in everything one offers to God to be used by God. "Take Lord and receive all my liberty, my memory and my understanding and my will, all that I am and have you have given me, to you I return it to use as you would. Give me only your love and your grace, with these I am rich enough and desire nothing more."

Thus Ignatius established this simple set of prayer practices, called ***The Spiritual Exercises***, which were all founded in the heart. These Exercises were not just for the elite and the leaders but also for the hearts of simple people. This simple spirituality was engrained in the people from the beginning of the Society. Even though the Society was suppressed from 1772 to 1814, this form of spirituality was still in the hearts of people. Thus, beginning with the Jesuits Scholastics of Val, the Apostleship of Prayer brought the Exercises to the hearts of all people. Older people recognized the Ignatian charisma that they had been given in their youth, this praying the morning offering, this heartfelt devotion to the Word of God, to the building of the Kingdom, to the following the King to the cross and beyond to the resurrection.

This was Catholicism, this was what they had been taught and were still being taught by others who has assumed the works of the Jesuits - the Franciscans, the Dominicans, others in their mission fields. But it was the familiarity that rang chords in the hearts of the people, as they made their morning offering and consecrated their families to the heart of Jesus.

This solid spirituality was taken to Rome for the Pope's approval after it began to spread around the world and as we say it spread around the world because the Society of Jesus was re-spreading around the world. As they did so they recognized in their own missionary tradition the validity of this simple form of prayer, this simple school of Prayer. These Jesuits, imitating Ramière they started magazines. Thus they started the Messengers of the Sacred Heart, leading this form of prayer into groups and communities, parishes, groups. They became the instruments of this school of prayer and thereby of its rapid growth around the world. It was not a movement but a school of prayer. It was at the service of everyone. The Apostleship of Prayer is a missionary effort to spread the kingdom and the message of Jesus Christ around the world.

## **Part Nine**

### **PAPAL APPROVAL: 'A WAY TO HOLINESS'**

So when the second founder Ramiere, brought this program to Rome for the Popes' blessings, the popes were eager to approve it. The popes said, "This is the way to become a saint. Anyone who begins the day with an authentic offering of his or her life to Christ or to the Father for the building up of the kingdom and then lives that offering and takes that offering to the Eucharist so that Christ himself can assume it and blend it with his own and make it a part of his own, this person is on the road to sanctity." And that is what every pope since has said whenever asked to bless again the Apostleship of Prayer: This is a way to become holy and to spread the holiness of God all around the world. This is, of course, what has explained its toughness, its firmness, its solidity; for it is a solid program and it is a safe spiritual program. No bishop, no priest has ever doubted it. He may not like the particular

forms that it has taken in his diocese or parish, but nobody has ever, no priest has ever worried about how orthodox it is, how safe it is, how solid it is. Most are most enthusiastic about it, as the popes have been from the very beginning with their approval of it, the blessings and the indulgences that they gave it.

## **Prayer Intentions**

Well, eventually there was one more thing that Ramiere did. Each month he suggested, to all these millions of people around the world who were praying and offering their lives as a missionary effort for the building up of the kingdom, that if they all prayed together for one single intention each month, this would be a tremendous opportunity for the Holy Spirit and God the Father and God the Son to do their work, not just in answer to prayer for the particular prayer that was being made by millions all around the world, but using these very people as instruments of the graces that he was communicating along the lines of the petition made. If hearts and minds of people everywhere were open to this particular grace, then it was IN the hearts and THROUGH the hearts and minds of these millions of people that this very grace could be applied to the situations of the context of the petition, for the people in the situation that all were praying for each month. And so, these monthly intentions became a very important factor along with the morning offering, along with frequent communion and regular confession, along with the practice of an evening examen of one's day, along with the practice of offering each day to the Father through the Heart of Jesus or to Jesus through the heart of Mary. This praying for an intention each month, a missionary intention, this continued to strengthen the idea of Catholics all over the world and other Christians that joined them in this prayer campaign that they themselves were missionaries. Their mission was to build the kingdom of God and they WERE BUILDING the kingdom of God!

These people were building the kingdom not just in their own lives, in their own places of business or study, not just in their own homes or communities, but they were building the kingdom all around the world. In every corner where anyone spoke the name of Jesus Christ, the prayers of millions of people elsewhere all around the world were with that person, strengthening and supporting that person. In that sense by prayer they were making all these millions of people present in that missionary effort true missionaries. Not just in their own little corner of the world where they were actively engaged in building the kingdom but through the efforts of these missionaries far-flung around the world and in the hearts of the simple people who for the first time were, with open hearts and open minds, hearing the word of God, accepting the word of God and beginning their own march towards the kingdom.

## **Part Ten**

On one of Ramiere's frequent trips to Rome in the late 1880s, one of the suggestions that he made was to bring this prayer campaign into close co-ordination with the works of the Propagation of the Faith: there had not always been successful harmony between the Roman Office that directed missions around the world and Jesuit Missionaries. Sometimes the Jesuit ideas were a little bit too visionary for the rather staid positions of the men who were running things back in Rome. Ramière recognized that this prayer program was nothing but a Church effort that had been approved by the Popes. And consequently Ramière, recognizing on the one hand the missionary character of this prayer campaign and

on the other hand the need to or rather the desirability of making sure it was well integrated and harmonized with the work of the Church as such, did what he could to integrate its efforts with those of the Propagation of the Faith which directed the far-flung missions of the Church. So that on an occasion he was in Rome he suggested to the cardinal prefect of this congregation that, since there were these monthly intentions which were concerned with the Missionary activities of the Church, that no one was better prepared to prepare the list of mission intentions for this campaign than the cardinal prefect of the congregation. The cardinal prefect very happily conceded to this invitation and began to draw up the list of mission intentions himself. A few years later (it was 1890 or 1891) when it was called to Leo XIII's attention that the cardinal prefect was drawing up these intentions he said, "No, I want to draw up these intentions. No one knows better than the pope what the world needs its millions to be praying for. If we are going to be praying for specific intentions each month, then I want to draw up that list", and so he did. So ever since, the popes have in one fashion or another been the ones to draw up and approve the prayer intentions, the monthly prayer intentions of the Apostleship of Prayer. So people all around the world are joined together in praying these intentions.

Again we must notice that it is not a prayer that suggests that he perform a miracle. Perhaps he will - every grace of God is a miracle in one sense or another, but his ordinary graces and even his extraordinary graces presume the co-operation of his human instrument. So the millions of people who pray each month, whether it is for peace or whether it is for Christian families have their hearts and minds open when they are praying for an intention. These minds and hearts are open not only just in prayer but also in the willingness and the desire to be instruments of God's grace and indeed they are. We do not just pray for peace: anyone who prays for peace works for peace and if he does not work for peace then there is nothing authentic about his prayer for peace. If this prayer is to be a prayer of the will then it means "Lord, use me, I WANT peace!" Everybody in the world that has a good heart wants peace. Everybody in the world that wants peace sincerely and authentically is working for peace is a peacemaker that knows he cannot or she cannot achieve peace unless it is the working of God's grace. God is the only one that can really bring the hearts of mankind to live in peace with each other. And so with this sense of universal and local Church, community and family participation in the building up of the kingdom, this missionary attitude developed and so grew in the hearts of people around the world. Slowly the anti-clericalism that existed in the Catholic Church during the nineteenth century was changed. Men in parishes began to participate in the life of the Church and slowly joined the feminine element and the children of the parish in standing up for Christ and being counted. Thus the simple prayer of the Apostleship of prayer strengthened the Church and the Church again grew.

## **Part Eleven**

### **EUCHARISTIC FORMATION OF CHILDREN**

Pius X became very interested in the Apostleship of Prayer as had been a pastor and also he would have had learnt the morning offering when he was a child, taught it by his mother, his teachers in the schools. He realized the strength of living the Eucharist, not just receiving the Eucharist but living the Eucharist. He was the one who decided and decreed that children also should be invited to live

their lives oriented around the Eucharist, around participation in the Eucharist. He wanted children to receive the Eucharist and receive it as frequently as they could or would.

The Apostleship of Prayer, knowing of his desire, put itself completely at the service of the preparation and formation and orientation of children in receiving the Eucharist and living the Eucharist. Thus was born the Eucharistic Crusade. In its early stages it was not an initiative of the Apostleship of Prayer. It began in France independently of the Apostleship of Prayer but soon united its forces with those of the Apostleship of Prayer in France and so spread around the world as a school of prayer which prepared children for their Eucharist and oriented them for the rest of their lives in their Eucharistic prayer practices.

As with other religious programs, the strength of this program began to derive itself from the simple fact that the older members were always preparing their children to live this same life style. As it was learnt in the family it was accepted in childhood, in the hearts and minds of the truly sincere children taught by their parents, and family. So the Eucharistic formation of children became the source of strength and on-going vigor and a guarantee for the on-going vitality, to the Apostleship of Prayer as a spiritual program in the parishes and in the schools and in the other diocesan activities of the church.