

STATIO CONFERENCE
PRAYER: MINDFULNESS OF GOD,
LECTIO AND LITURGY
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Framework of this Conference

I am writing this conference after a very touching and moving experience of facilitating a retreat with the staff of our Hospital in Tacloban when the super typhoon ***Yolanda*** raged with fury , taking the lives of people, destroying their houses, property, and vegetation. . Listening to them, I was struck by one thing: **Amidst the fury and upsurge of the super typhoon, the people found themselves crying out in prayer, begging the Lord for mercy, protection, and courage to face the deluge that confronted them.**

A larger framework for this conference is the fact that this is a Statio Conference for April, the month when the entire Christendom is celebrating Christ's Paschal Mystery : his pains, his agony, his death that ends in his glorious resurrection.

A. PRAYER

The PRAYER OF JESUS: ***ABBA! FATHER!***

It was always Jesus' practice to face any venture in loving communion with his Father. This was most visible and tangible when he faced those hours in his life when he knew that suffering and death were at hand.

After the Last Supper in the Upper Room, Jesus went out and crossed the Brook Kidron to seek a place in a quiet garden in Gethsemane.
"Sadness came over him . . . and with great distress . . . he told his disciples ' My soul is sorrowful to the point of death.'

"He fell on his face and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, **let it be as you, not I, would have it.**'"

"Again, a second time, he prayed, '**My Father, if this cup cannot pass by without my drinking it, your will be done.**' "

PRAYER in Our Own Gethsemane

Oftentimes, we wish and pray that there will be no Gethsemane in our life : we wish that there will be no sorrow, no question, no time of terrible waiting, no cup of suffering, no cross in our lives . . . But, life has taught us that there are problems, pains and difficulties along the way.

But, we need to remember that through Christ, we, too, are sons and daughters of the Father. When we pass through painful journeys in our life, we have Christ with us and we have a loving Father who will keep us in his care.

The Ultimate Goal in JESUS' PRAYER

On Palm Sunday, we will be recalling that day when Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Festival. When the crowd heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, they took branches of palms and went out to meet him, shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessings on the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

Among those who went to worship at the festival were God-fearing men. They approached Philip and made this request, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Andrew and Philip told Jesus:

But, it was at this point, at the seeming height of his popularity, that Jesus told his disciples what his whole life and his **ultimate goal in life was** :

"Now, my soul is troubled. What shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour' No, for this purpose, I have come to this hour. 'FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME.'

Christ did not withdraw from the cross but saw it as an instrument whereby he would glorify the Father. With incredible boldness and confidence, he pronounced his prediction, " And, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He already heard the promise that through him, his Father's name would be glorified. But now, Jesus predicted what the Father would accomplish through his being lifted up on the cross. He would become an irresistible magnet who would draw countless people to His Father's love.

Our DESIRE for GLORY

We have developed the practice of ending our prayer and all our projects with the logo, "***that in all things GOD may be glorified!***" Do we really understand what that means? And, do we live according to that motto?

Rather, we ask ourselves:

- When we work hard for a project, when we do everything to accomplish something, when the project is accomplished, do we not seek glory for ourselves?
- Do we become resentful if people do not recognize our efforts?
- How much time do I spend fretting over the extent to which my name is being glorified on the lips of others.

JESUS' PRAYER for Forgiveness

Hanging on the Cross, Jesus said, ***“Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.”***

The prayer of forgiveness is an untapped power in bringing about wholeness to our whole being. Fr. Robert Dew Grandis gave an account of a woman who would not forgive her husband's ***“Querida.”*** The woman was suffering from a severe arthritis that has crippled her. The pain was excruciating. A nun who was praying with the woman helped her see the need for forgiveness . . . she spent days and hours with this crippled woman trying to lead her towards forgiveness . . . till one day . . . rising from the bitterness of her heart, the wife prayed, expressing her forgiveness of the husband's ***“querida”***. Immediately, the pain disappeared and she stood up and got out of bed .

How many of us are crippled by **unforgiveness. . . allowing ourselves to be enslaved by our resentments, anger, and bitterness toward someone who has hurt us?**

Vernon Schreiber, the author of the book ABBA! FATHER! writes about the need to forgive ourselves and to forgive others in order to move on.

Now comes the hard part. It is time to pray for the forgiveness of everyone in our lives . . . that means offering a prayer for forgiveness for oneself. We need to forgive ourselves and to ask for God's forgiveness. How can we pray with a free and forgiving spirit for others if we are still in debt of ourselves? Such a prayer is not to make excuses for our actions. It is to accept the grace of God in the name of Jesus. Free and forgiven, we can then move on to others,

When I ask people what sins are hardest to forgive, the most frequent responses are : *“When someone has treated me unfairly”* or *“when someone I really counted on has let me down and betrayed my trust”*

We need to pray for all, even the ones who have hurt us most. We will omit no one from our forgiveness.

JESUS' PRAYER for our Oneness

At the end of last supper with his disciples, Jesus said a prayer : a prayer from the deepest chamber from his heart.

“I pray that they may be one as You, Father, are in me and I, in You.. . that they may be one as You and I are one”

This unity begins with what Christ does in us. We are stirred into a new awareness of one another. It is important that we spend our Statio Day facing this reality:

our oneness with our sisters in community; our oneness with our co-workers . . with the poor . . with those who need us.

B. MINDFULNESS

Nota bene: I got the following thoughts from Fr. Michael Caseys' book "***The Undivided Heart.***" Fr. Casey addresses his reflection to monks. I took the liberty of changing the word *monks* into *sisters.*)

MINDFULNESS is a significant theme in the Benedictine Tradition. By mindfulness, the sister grows in her ability to perceive truth about herself, about God, about the world in which she lives.

There are three (3) stages of mindfulness:

- a. **Memoria** : **fear of the Lord** : This word connotes a seriousness in the ordering of life and a care to live according to the commandments
- b. **Meditatio** : an active effort to retain and enter into the riches of revealed truth
- c. **A state of consciousness of the PRESENCE OF GOD in our lives**

1. **Memoria** : The chapter on Humility in the Rule of St. Benedict states :

The first step of humility is that having the fear of God always before her eyes, the Sister entirely flees from forgetfulness and is always mindful of everything that God has commanded. She constantly turns over her mind that those who despise God burn in hell for their sins and how eternal life has been prepared for those who fear God.

In his chapter on humility, Benedict insists that the Sister's religious endeavor be a full-time occupation. In describing the first step of humility, he uses the word "**semper**" (always) **eight (8) times**. (see verses 10, 13, 14, 18, 22) of chapter 7

2. Mindfulness and "Meditatio" Although a Sister is mindful of her own shortcomings and lack of resources, she is constantly strengthened by her perception of the bounty of God and the boundless possibilities opened up by grace.

Monastic life has been geared to **promoting mindfulness**. The purpose of "**fuga mundi**" is not escape into a separate set of distractions, but to make provision for that solitude, disengagement and creative monotony which are necessary for heightened awareness. When the emphasis is on doing things instead of on the personal content of every action, there is danger that monasticism will degenerate into a mindless program of endurance and good works, loosely legitimated by reference to hierarchical authorities.

The Sister needs consciously to turn her whole being to the presence of God, lift up her heart in the midst of living and to open her mind to God's revelation. Opportunity for this comes, structurally, through the Hours of the Opus Dei in which the Sister is able to give herself more explicitly to converse with God than

is possible in the other moments of personal prayer which season her daily activities. The Hours of Prayer of the Opus Dei are aids to a general mindfulness, reminders of the presence of God and vehicles for his Word.

3. Mindfulness as Transformation.

Memoria / Mindfulness is like the soul's embrace by which it clings to God without any sense of weariness. When the memory is filled with God, the joy, grace and love flood the heart; understanding and love are activated; temptation and infidelity are kept at bay.

In the Sister who has been admitted to this level of mindfulness, Christ is powerfully active. Her life is characterized by wisdom, the "outshining of eternal light." And she develops an affinity for the spiritual and the divine. She does not take pride with a sense of achievement because **all is gift from God.**

C. LECTIO

Lectio Divina is an INVITATION to LISTEN DEEPLY FOR GOD'S VOICE in Scripture and then to allow what we hear to shape our way of being in the world.

Steps of Lectio Divina

1. **Deep Listening.** The first words of St. Benedict's Rule are an invitation to **"to listen with the ear of the heart."** The religious who listens with the "ear of the heart" listens for the voice of God above all the other voices competing for our attention. When we listen with the ear of the heart, we listen for God to break through the innermost chamber, the very center of our being. Listening with the ear of the heart enables us to enter into relationship with God through the all the aspects of our lives.

Psalm 46 tells us : **"Be still and know that I am God."**

We are living in a culture of noise, achievement, performance. We turn off the phone, the computer, television, i-pod, etc. and we become aware of the enormous chatter going on in our minds. We need **Silence, Stillness and Solitude; Silence focuses on presence.** *This enables us to connect with ourselves, with God and his Word. and with others.*

2. **Savoring the Word.** The second step in Lectio Divina is : when your heart is touched, then stop reading and begin to meditate. Dolores Dowling quotes the Cistercian scholar, Andre Louf: In the course of my reading, I have been struck by some saying, **"my heart has been wounded."** I repeat this slowly in the silence of my heart. Then I yield up the Word of God to the Spirit within me and then, my heart gives birth to prayer.
3. **Responding to a Touched Heart.** The third step in lectio is **Praying with God's Word.** When the heart is touched with a new vision, there is often a spontaneous response evoked in us. We cannot help but respond when God

touches the heart. Conversion is the process of falling more deeply in love with God and the world. It means allowing ourselves to be surprised by God.

The heart prays in many different ways. Sometimes, our prayer will be of deep joy and gratitude; at other times, our prayer will lead to grief; still at other times, prayer will awaken anger about injustice. Sometimes, we will be challenged to look at the life-giving or life-draining activities that take up our time.

- 4. Contemplative Awakening and Awareness.** Contemplation means cultivating a state of mind and body of being fully present to God in a loving and unhurried way. With time and practice, we will bring this awareness of God's presence to every moment of our lives. We will eventually find ourselves following St. Paul's invitation : **"to pray without ceasing."**

The fourth step of Lectio divina, CONTEMPLATION is basking in the experience of love: allowing love to work its transforming renewal within. God is intimately present and entwined in our lives.

Contemplation is first and foremost a gift. We can create space for contemplation in our lives but ultimately **the ability to move into a state of being and stillness is a GIFT FROM THE ONE WHO IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LOVE.**

GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY SHARED PRAYER.

For this STATIO, I suggest that the community will come together for praying with Christ :

Share with the community your concerns about a person /or a family / or your own personal experience of some painful turn in our journey through life.

At the end, bring all these concerns to Christ who brings all our joys and pains to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever. Amen.

We bring all these concerns to our Celebration of the LITURGY:

The LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST and of THE HOURS

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