



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Prayer and Charity

The season of Lent invites us to live spiritually and concretely the dimensions of prayer and charity. A few passages on these two themes taken from the book - "(cfr. pag. 64-75) And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of ointment" could help our reflection.

First of all the prayer:

Prayer should never be missing from our lives.

In the family of Nazareth, Jesus learned to pray in the Jewish style in the synagogue of His village. Prayer belonged to the life of Jesus, and this aroused in the disciples the desire to imitate Him. And so, He not only recommended it but also taught how to pray.

The "Our Father", and it became content and guide. The Lord then also taught how to pray: without hypocrisy, in confidentiality, without wasting words. Lastly, "keeping vigil" in prayer appears in the Gospels as an evident constant of the Lord before the most important moments.

Thus, the night before His Passion, the Lord asked His disciples to keep vigil and pray together with Him.

Praying per se also belongs to the style and nature of the Church. Therefore, every Christian, man and woman, is well advised to learn to pray and to do so constantly. In fact, faith is expressed in prayer — not *our* faith, but that of Jesus, to which we are attached. Always in the prayer we must also ask Him to allow us to unite with Him to address the Father together and obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to the splendid teaching of St. Augustine, who said that the Lord Jesus "prays for us, as our Priest; He prays in us, as our Head; He is prayed to by us, as our God." [1]

As to charity, in one of the most beautiful documents of his pontificate, Benedict XVI wrote that "the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity"[2] is the charity, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection. Charity is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a question here of understanding that the root of charity is Christ: His life, His teaching, the signs that accompanied Him, His Passion, death, and Resurrection.

Jesus never speaks in defense of charity. He shows it concretely in reference to people in need: the poor, the sick, the woman accused of adultery, the possessed; and also the expert in the law who asked him: "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10,29). Jesus gives him no explanations but tells the parable of the good Samaritan, about a man who, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, was set upon by brigands who robbed him, beat him, and abandoned him half-dead; only a Samaritan took care of him. The conclusion was obvious: "Go and do likewise."

Together with the prayer, which manifests our Faith, charity also prolongs Christ's presence in the world if love of neighbor is rooted in the love of God; this aspect is fundamental in the Christian vision, because love for one's neighbor frees itself from a certain neutral anthropological conception and recovers the theological one established by Christ; love of neighbor is a task that concerns each of the faithful, but, at the same time, belongs to the entire ecclesial community, from the local one to the universal Church in Her entirety. Insofar as they are then united to the mystery of Christ, sacramentally through baptism, Christians perceive that they are members of the same family, that of God, who calls us never to lose sight of our belonging and our mission for good, to which we are further directed and strengthened by our personal vocation, as married, single, consecrated, but also as members of specific associations.

The commitments we took on are now of significant importance and are in line with what is recalled by both the Acts of the Apostles — “all who had become believers had all things in common and shared with each other according to each person's needs” (Acts 2,44-45) — and the apostle Paul, who, in moments of particular calamity, of persecution, and of famine, asked the communities of Antioch, Greece, Galatia, and Macedonia to remember the “saints” in Jerusalem and to hold collections, which he later described as generous, indeed “beyond their ability” (2 Cor 8,3-4). Christians therefore perceive, in this common commitment of prayer and charity, to have one of the characteristic “traits,” which allows them to exercise their spirituality through “a marked generosity” drawn from their “own material resources.” [3] It is worthwhile remembering here the superb words of Pope St. Leo the Great: “May generosity given to the poor and the suffering be greater so that thanks may be given to God. And may it happen with joy.” [4]

The joy of doing good! Lent urges us to walk on this dual track: prayer and charity.

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[1] See St. Augustine, Exposition on Psalm 86, CCL 39, 1176-1177.

[2] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter. *Caritas in Veritate*, n.1; see also Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*.

[3] See in this regard article 4 of the Constitution.

[4] St. Leo the Great, pope, Discorsi (no.10) *sulla Quaresima*, 3-5, PL 54, pp. 299-301.

