

# Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

Cullman, Alabama

[www.ChristTheKingAbbey.org](http://www.ChristTheKingAbbey.org)

Every Sunday: 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM

Daily: 6:00 AM

Holy Days of Obligation:

6:00 AM – 8:00 AM – 7:00 PM

## Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 AM

Only on first Sunday  
of each month

## Saint Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 AM

Every Sunday except  
first Sunday of each month

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 16, 2009 – Green

Mass of Sunday GI; Cr; Preface of Holy Trinity

Weekly Bulletin #1108

*O Lord, uphold us and  
our absent brethren.*

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

By

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp. Part 6

1957

### (i) *Prayer and Preaching*

Sermons are preached with great frequency in many a place. But do results correspond to the effort and work involved? Too often the harvest is meager and poor; wheat is sown and the harvest is of briers (Jer. 12, 13). As a result many a preacher begins to grow weary of expounding. Who is at fault? The priest, God's sower (Mark 4, 14), or the hearer, God's cultivation (1 Cor. 3, 9)? Or does the fault lie in the seed itself? Perhaps it is not always God's word that is sown, but words of human wisdom (1 Cor. 2, 13) which bear in them no vitality.

After the second world-war an old experienced lay apostle in Vienna approached the city preachers in order to set before them the wishes of the layfolk. "In these grave and troubled times, he said in the course of his explanation, what we want is the *whole-wheat bread* of Christ's genuine doctrine and not white bread. Formerly one sermon converted three thousand people (Acts 2, 40); often to-day three thousand sermons do not avail to convert a single person." In a certain periodical it was stated that if one dropped in to a church at random on a Sunday to hear a preacher one would be lucky to come across a moderately good sermon. Doubtless a great part of the blame for this rests on the preacher. But the audience is not above reproach.

The best food, even when presented in the most appetizing way, does little good if it is merely swallowed but not digested and assimilated. This work a person has to do for himself; none can substitute for him. What food is for the body the word of God is for the spirit. "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4, 4). The word of God is nourishment for the soul. Genuine hearing of the word of God is the act of absorbing this nourishment. This is not achieved by mere "eating"; just as important is its assimilation. This process of assimilation and digestion has to be done by oneself. For secular knowledge it is sufficient if the teacher or professor can explain the subject matter to his pupil in a clear and intelligible way. In the supernatural order, too, the preacher must try to reach the ear and penetrate to the understanding of his listeners. But even he can go no further. "We can only sound our message in the ear, says St Augustine; if it is to strike a chord in the heart of the hearer the Holy Spirit must intervene."

With the hearing of the word of God (and the same is true of the reading of it) the listener has accomplished only the first part of his task. The second and more difficult part has necessarily to follow; otherwise the mere hearing of it is almost profitless. It is unfortunately not enough to have a clear intellectual grasp of the truth in question; the heart has to be enlisted, as in the supernatural order it is the heart and not the intellect alone that to make the decision. Not all that is spoken is meant for everybody; but that part of the message which sounds a chord in my heart is meant for me. And this I have to work upon and assimilate so that it becomes my very flesh and blood. He who merely listens to the word and does not live by it deceives himself; he "shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself and went his way and presently forgot what manner of man he was. But he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"