

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

Cullman, Alabama

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

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 30, 2009 – Green

Mass of Sunday Gl; Cr; comm Ss Felix and Adactus Mm

Preface of Holy Trinity

Weekly Bulletin #1110

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

THE POWER OF PRAYER

By

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp. Part 8

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(iii) *Without Mental Prayer no Liturgical Prayer*

Liturgical prayer is in most cases community prayer, and so it has its peculiar difficulties. We are not exempt from distractions by the fact that we are using ancient church texts consecrated by long usage. Nor is the devout recital of liturgical prayer made any easier by the need to be more than usually careful in attending to outer forms and ceremonies. Like every community prayer, liturgical prayer, too, must draw its vigour and intimacy more from the inner depths of the individual soul than from the external association of those who pray.

True, in community prayer as such there lies a peculiar power: “I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18, 19.). “God cannot but hearken to the prayers of the many when they all, as it were, form a single prayer” (St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary. in Matt.*). Just as the individual ought not be solely concerned with self when he prays but must definitely associate himself with the community and draw life from the community, so too when there is question of liturgical prayer, the sphere of interest of the corporate body must be enlarged so that with our community prayer the prayer of the entire Church militant, suffering and triumphant can sound and vibrate in unison.

Precisely those who engage in liturgical prayer should make particular efforts in the matter of their personal, mental prayer. Liturgical prayer has to draw from an interior spirit for its animating and supporting principle. Else there is danger of a certain hollowness in the prayer. This danger is all the greater because of the attention that must be devoted to outer forms and outer structures. **If depth is lacking, then one can easily stick fast in externals, in formalities, aesthetic enjoyment and fine playacting before God. The decisive factor here is inner union with Christ and not bodily presence in the choir. In the last resort it is Christ who is the great Liturgist, the real and unique High-priest. If one worships in and through and with Christ, even though utterly secluded, one's prayer is of its own accord lifted out of the narrow confines of one's own heart and set within world-embracing range of the Redeemer's Heart.** Who would call such prayer private prayer? What a wonderful prayer that must be when each individual in choir prays with and through Christ, and the entire community, united in him, offers the Father continuous praise and glorification!

It would be perverse to recommend liturgical prayer to the exclusion of personal prayer. One must undertake the one but may not neglect the other. How will one find God in community worship if one has failed to find him in solitude? “It is hard to see Christ in a crowd,” says St Augustine; “we need a certain solitariness of spirit if we are to see him; we see him in a sort of secret view.” External association is much; interior is more; a combination of the two is the ideal. Personal prayer is the root and foundation of all prayer including the liturgical, while the latter is its crown, its fairest fruit; and the deeper and sounder the root the more precious