

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)
www.christthekingabbey.org

Cullman, Alabama
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

St Pius V Chapel
Birmingham, Alabama
9:30 AM
Every Sunday except
first Sunday of each month

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 13, 2010 – Green

Mass of Sunday Gl; Cr; Comm St. Anthony of Padua

Preface Holy Trinity

Weekly Bulletin #1152

THE POWER OF PRAYER

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp.

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Prayer involves a distinction of persons in every case. Hence all formulae of prayer are couched in the second person. "Our Father Who *Art...* Hallowed be *Thy* Name... *Thy* Kingdom... *Thy* Will... Hail Mary... The Lord is with *thee*."

Hence formulae in the third person are not prayers in the proper sense of the term; they become such only when addressed, at least equivalent to a person with whom we enter into contact. **The "I believe in God," for instance, is not formally a prayer; nobody is addressed; it is a profession of one's belief, an enumeration of the twelve articles to which every Catholic must give assent. If the *Creed* were a prayer, so too would be the recital of the *Decalogue*, the *Ten Commandments* we have to observe.** The foremost condition, therefore, for every prayer is to place ourselves at the beginning in the presence of the person with whom we are to speak. Better still, we must be habitually conscious of the person's presence. Not indeed that He is made present through any initiative of ours, for He is already there before we are conscious of His presence. We need not conjure up a picture in the imagination; rather we must have an intelligent conviction of the fact of His presence. We neglect often this prelude to prayer: we start praying and speaking without realizing who He is whom we are addressing. And just because we pray at haphazard and in a muddled way we are capable of all possible and impossible combinations in our prayer: "Three *Our Fathers* to St Joseph or St Anthony," "Say for your penance, three *Hail Mary's* to the Sacred Heart." The *Our Father* we can direct to God the Father only, not to the divine Redeemer; He is not our Father; we can say it, indeed, in honour of the Redeemer and say it with Him and through Him but not to Him. In the *Hail Mary* we invoke the Blessed Virgin and none else. "A Prayer," writes St Teresa, "in which a person does not consider to whom he is speaking, nor what he asks, nor what he is who ventures to speak to God, I regard as no prayer, no matter how eagerly the lips move." *Interior Castle*, Chap. 1, 9).

To whom should we direct our prayer? If we are using a fixed form of prayer the text itself settles the matter. Were we to direct our prayer to a person other than the one addressed or invoked, the resulting inconsistency will be obvious; we would be addressing one not mentioned at all in the prayer formula. Or else, paying no further attention to the text, we would have to turn in spirit to another person. Actually such a diversion might be profitable to avoid distractions when reciting the Psalms; in contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary one has to adopt it. We read or hear frequently enough that the Rosary is a wonderful combination of both vocal and mental prayer. That, however, is not the case. **We mortals are not in a position to occupy ourselves with two sets of conscious objects at the same time. It is impossible to think simultaneously of the *Hail Mary's* and the mysteries of the Rosary, apart from the case where the *Hail Mary* and the mystery refer to the same event. Seeing that we can give our total attention to only one thing at a time, we have either to concentrate on the *Hail Mary* or the mystery.** An effort at contemplating the mysteries is indeed prescribed. The ten *Aves* are the framework, so to speak, surrounding a mystery of the Rosary at a given time; they serve as a sort of time-measure; when they have been duly said then one turns to meditate on fresh mysteries. Meditation, even when silence prevails, is not easy, at least in the beginning; it is normally not made easier when the simultaneous recital of the *Hail Mary's* in common engages us. A person has to be fairly good at mental prayer if he is to comply with this demand. □ **To be continued...**