

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

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Weekly Bulletin #1157

July 18, 2010 – Green

Mass of Sunday Gl; Cr; Ss Symphorosa and Seven Sons Mm Preface Holy Trinity

THE POWER OF PRAYER

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp.

Part 35

1957

The tongue with which we praise God should not be used in order to speak ill of the neighbor. "My brethren, things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth, of the same hole, sweet and bitter water?" (James 3, 11). If we must speak why is it we go merely to our fellow men who in the last resort cannot adequately help us? At life's close each of us has to stand alone with his God. Why not go to Him immediately and as a matter of course in order to lay before Him our annoyance and vexation, the bitter thoughts we indulge, the joys too and thanks we feel? He who has none by his side to whom he can unbosom himself, must stomach every snub, is in bad case, especially when irritation cannot be worked off but gathers and accumulates within. This harms the soul in the end, and in many cases too injures bodily health. Half the cure lies in being able to vent one's feelings by confiding in someone. Let us approach God: we have Him, too, to receive our confidences. Moreover, such conversation with God is not only effective and valuable from a psychological point of view; it is also prayer, and in praying to Him we pray to one who is in a position to give us genuine help. "You shall call upon Me, and you shall go; and you shall pray to Me, and I will hear you" (Jer. 29, 12). "In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me and enlarged me" (Ps. 117, 5).

In addition to these themes of conversation about oneself and the dear neighbor there are several others we may discuss with God in prayer. We can talk to Him about any subject we bring up in conversation with others, even about things we cannot discuss with them. We can talk with Him about the family, the community, the parish, the important intentions of the Church and its extension on earth. We can talk to Him about Himself, about our divine Lord and His life and sufferings. We have certainly abundance of matter. It is an interesting fact that two people who have no particular talent for conversation can entertain each other for hours if they have mutual affection for each other. With them the material is not likely to be exhausted easily. Whereas such as have not reached a mutual understanding are unable to carry on a conversation naturally, no matter how talented each is in entertaining others. They have nothing to say.

Conversation is in large measure conditioned by the atmosphere which prevails between two persons. Without atmosphere there will be no real conversation. The more appropriate the atmosphere the more easily will the conversation be led forward. Two people who are good friends and go for a walk together need not rehearse beforehand what they are to talk about; their problem is, not whether they have enough matter, but whether they have enough time.

Why is it, on the other hand, we have little or nothing to say to God? Why does our matter so often give out when we are with Him? Why have we specially to prepare in advance and look up subject-matter from books when we betake ourselves to prayer? If only we knew Him a little and, as a result, loved Him a little, there would really be no problem. Love makes us eloquent, though, no doubt, great love makes us dumb.

Prayer, then, in every case is an interchange with an intimate friend, with one who is alive and present to us. If we pray in community we have to employ set formulae of prayer. At Mass we usually follow the liturgical texts. If we pray in private on other occasions we can make use of a prayer book or other set texts. Indeed, we have to make use of these when we have nothing more to say in our own way, or when we are too tired and exhausted to frame a personal prayer. When praying, it will be better not to fall back immediately on a formula we have learnt by heart. The oftener we employ it the more it wears by constant use, the bigger effort we have to make in order to relate the set words to our present state of soul. In addition, a fresh effort is needed on our part in order to make contact with God through the prayer formula. This is even exacting when we use a prayer book, as its contents are usually set out in broad and general terms so as to make it available to as many readers as possible. How quickly we are distracted then! We neither attend to God nor to the set words and texts. "It seems to me a strange thing, says Heinen, that man has to speak to God, not as the heart prompts, nor as his affections, his needs, his joys dictate, but as it is found in the book and couched in so learned a way that he scarce understands what he reads." Besides, what we have to say to God cannot always be conveyed in prayer-book fashion.