



Southern Sentinel

REGNAVIT A LIGNO DEUS

HOLY CROSS SEMINARY

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5 May 2013

No. 105

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

The month of Mary begins with a day in honour of St. Joseph, under the title of the Worker. This notion of “working for God” lends itself to many ideas of truly serving God and neighbour – and many misinterpretations, which lead many souls astray. The true and perfect work of God is to adore God. Falling short of this high ideal, many misunderstandings have arisen and many ungodly disputes have ensued. Consider the explanation of Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B.:

There is an old saying to the effect that laborare est orare, which is often given the rather facile and superficial meaning: ‘to work is to pray.’ Those who coined the saying attached a very different signification to it. What they meant was that prayer is real work. In their judgement a man who gives himself to earnest, habitual prayer, is as much a worker as he who applies his energy to some manual or intellectual task. However there is truth in the adage even in the more obvious rendering, though it is often misinterpreted in these days when men are more ready to undergo toil and fatigue in the pursuit of external activity, than in the effort demanded by prayer and contemplation. To serve God in the person of our neighbour is indeed a work of charity and one of the finest flowers of Christianity. It was an ideal such as this that inspired a Vincent de Paul and all the countless heroes, known and unknown, of Christian brotherly love. But often enough those who profess to serve God by serving man are only too apt to forget God altogether. (The Church’s Daily Prayer, 1938)

If God is forgotten, He is not in our prayer. A prayer life without God is absurd. Fr. Eugene Boylan, O.C.D., in *The Priest’s Way to God*, explains that *prayer is a meeting with God, in which we give expression, in speech or in silence, to our acceptance of His will, our intention to carry out His desires and our own desire of union with Him. If there is not some degree of sincerity in our dispositions, our prayer is little better than a delusion.* God is necessary in prayer – as both the means to pray and the object of our prayer.

Prayer is work and it is *the* work of God. Man was created in order to share in the divine occupation of glorifying God in his life on earth and in heaven. Nonetheless, man may, and must, apply himself to the vicissitudes of life in a prayerful manner, as is befitting the talents God has given him. The burden of our physical labours in life is understood as a consequence of sin. We are reluctant to apply ourselves to arduous labour’s undesirable difficulty – *toiling in the heat by the sweat of the brow.* The effort in prayer is also toilsome.



The Work of Prayer in the House of God

And to pray *well*... how much more difficult this is? But is prayer really difficult? This is contrary to reality. *Prayer is simply*, says Archbishop Lefebvre, *being in the presence of God, like a child near his mother. He loves and is devoted to his mother, because he is near – even doing nothing... simply near. Be with God and you pray. (Priestly Holiness)*

St. Joseph is a model of both prayer and of labour. The notion that saints are uniquely *special* and endowed with an *extraordinary* charism for prayer, as in St. Joseph or the Blessed Virgin, suggests that profound prayer is not common to *ordinary* men and seemingly dispenses the vast majority of us from any “presumptuous pursuit of a higher prayer life”. This consideration readily offers the excuse that any hope or dream for a profound and devout prayer life and recollection is quite vain. Or, we may adopt the attitude that rebukes “exaggerated piety”, which stems from emotional exuberance overcoming reason and urging to simulated piety.

To suggest that prayer is the privilege of a very few chosen saints is to posit that prayer is, for the average man, not attainable and that many “devout” souls are simply “spiritually deranged”; hence, there is no need to tax the mind with such a pursuit. This is a great injustice to the real and abundant gifts of God, Who not only commands us to pray, but showers His grace upon us, so as to be able to pray. Considering Archbishop Lefebvre’s explanation above, prayer is not difficult; yet, we do encounter difficulties in our pursuit of prayer.

One difficulty with prayer is our reluctance to work (and perseveringly) at praying well. We must resolve (even with grim determination) to actually pray – despite any and all difficulties encountered in this pursuit. Hence, another difficulty, the great difficulty in prayer, is the matter of a lack of sincerity. Sincerity in our prayer demands that we persevere in our efforts to pray, because we know God hears us and will bless our efforts to give Him glory. This sincerity demands that we correspond with the graces and lights God gives us in order to further advance in prayer and the spiritual life as a whole.

Fr. Boylan explains our tendency to stop short of progress in prayer because *...we want to meet God on our own terms; we want to make a compromise; we want to work with Him at certain times and in certain ways, but, to put it crudely, we want to be rid of Our Lord for a time. He is there all the time, and one either treats Him as a permanent friend, or else one has a ‘difficulty’ in prayer. (Difficulties in Mental Prayer)*

Grace makes us ever more aware of God’s presence, which cannot co-exist with what is not pleasing to Him. Grace makes us aware of this and our first reaction is to “not notice” that God is urging us to forsake or to commence something, which would improve our prayer and spiritual life. We must correspond, yet we struggle with our attachment to our own will and seek a compromise, which makes us uncomfortable being near God, being intimately alone in His presence.

If we back away from God’s grace, we lack sincerity and the result is that additional graces are withheld making impossible our advance in prayer. If we earnestly set out to pray, God *will* enlighten us and draw us to a more profound prayer, which begs us to forsake all that hinders prayer and the spiritual life. God will point out what obstacles to prayer need to be overcome – we must correspond, by His grace. We can certainly talk to Him about the difficulty and seek His help to comply with His Will. Facing this struggle is difficult, but praying to God about it is not, if we honestly love God. Trust God’s goodness to help us overcome our weakness and ask to pray well.



Splitting and stacking wood at the woodshed

What a work prayer is! It is a work we do not take on alone. Christ was sent to dwell among us for this reason – to pray for us and to pray with us. Christ is our success. If we refuse to work with Him, our prayer becomes restless, we seek distractions from His loving and piercing gaze, and we avoid prayer for some *other* good work. This temptation to ignore prayer for good works is the fallacy of activism. Activity becomes a replacement for prayer and may accomplish some good, but for others who will profit from the work – for such an activist is not growing, but is spiritually undeveloped and therefore risks losing his soul. St. Paul illustrates this danger: *But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway* (I Corinthians 9:27).

How many misguided souls made spiritual dwarves are caught up in busy-work and not the work of adoring God as He wishes? Such a soul has no recollection and fails to purify his intentions in his activities, which become more and more for the glory of the worker. By contrast, the true apostolate is genuine when the apostle is “pre-occupied” with, and steeped in, the life of prayer.

St. Pius X, in *Harent Animo* (his 1908 Encyclical on priestly holiness, §27) says: *There are some who think, and even declare openly, that the true measure of the merits of a priest is his dedication to the service of others; consequently, with an almost complete disregard for the cultivation of the virtues which lead to the personal sanctification of the priest (these they describe as passive virtues), they assert that all his energies and fervour should be directed to the development and practice of what they call the active virtues. One can only be astonished by this gravely erroneous and pernicious teaching.*

The 1917 Code of Canon Law directs Bishops to ensure that their clergy adhere to a regimen that fosters holiness of life and “success” in the ministry, beginning with *frequenting the Sacrament of Penance, daily mental prayer, regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the daily Holy Rosary and examination of conscience and the spiritual retreat.*

In contrast to St. Pius X and the 1917 Code, the revised 1983 Code of Canon Law novelly proposes the first means to holiness in the active virtues. Canon 276 states that clerics seek holiness *in the first place...[by fulfilling]...the obligations of their pastoral ministry* and only lastly suggests *mental prayer, Penance and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.* This new order of priestly holiness has been disastrous for priestly spiritual progress and the priestly ministry.

Not only have priests forsaken pursuit of a profound prayer life that keeps them focused upon giving glory to God in their priestly ministry, but the faithful are consequently misguided by this activist spirit in their shepherds and likewise wane in genuine prayer, which means spiritual starvation and ultimately, spiritual death. The present situation in the Church sadly attests to this fact.

Living in the presence of God, Whom we love, is the work of prayer. We are rightly humbled by our unworthiness and inability to adequately adore God by our feeble attempts at prayer. But our feebleness is not an excuse to abandon prayer when God has given us His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the perfect Adorer, by Whom and in Whom we perfectly pray. We must be encouraged by this divine truth. God demands us to pray to Him *and* He promises to hear and help us. How good and loving a God we have!

Hence, to give up on pursuing a profound prayer life is to give up on God. In abandoning prayer, we abandon God – the means whereby we *can* pray. Without prayer we will only further abandon God, the Source of grace by which we *can* perform supernatural works. Our Lord sternly but lovingly warns us: *...I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen: and do penance...* (Apocalypse 2:4-5).

If we lack generosity in cultivating a better prayer life, we need to ask God’s grace and then simply begin praying. This initial difficulty may be the penitential work needed to better our prayer life. Spiritual authors are united in their recommending daily spiritual reading as a necessary preparation for prayer. At the minimum, some five to ten minutes is not very much and easily doable in our “busy” lives. It is necessary that spiritual reading be reflective and not simply “getting through” the pages or the time. Think about what is read and there will naturally follow “something” about which to talk to Our Lord. This is prayer.

This month, as we reverently strive to honour Our Lady more devoutly, we may easily convince ourselves to present to her our offering of daily spiritual reading in preparation to speak with her Divine Son. Our Lady will certainly and efficaciously help us. Let us, my dear friends, go to the Mother of God, so that we, with St. Paul may say: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Galatians 2:20).

In the confidence of the wonderful love of Christ, Who dies in accomplishing the great work of our Redemption, may we, under the banner of Our Lady and St. Joseph, labour so that Christ's precious Blood be shed not in vain for ourselves and for others, and that God be glorified in all we do in this life!

As we at Holy Cross Seminary strive to work in this spirit of prayer, we sincerely thank you, dear friends and benefactors, for your continual support in prayers and sacrifices. Your generosity helps us spiritually and, of course, materially – our poverty is relieved and permits us to efficaciously focus upon the formation of vocations.

With the recent visit of the Bursar General at Holy Cross, Rev. Fr. Emeric Baudot, it was recommended that an appeal be made soliciting help for another costly and urgent project – the replacement of the main electrical switchboard of the Seminary. The local council and electrical company are urging us to update what safety genuinely bids us to address. Menzingen is not able to easily help us and the project is scheduled for the June holiday when power can be cut off for at least three days. The cost of this project will amount to over \$60,000. A tax receipt is issued for all tax deductible donations made to the Holy Cross Seminary Building Fund. We thank you for your kindness and generosity.

Please pray for us at Holy Cross and be assured of the Seminary's daily offering of the Holy Rosary for your intentions. May God bless you and sanctify your good works for His glory and the salvation of souls, and may Our Lady Immaculate, the Virgin Most Holy, watch over you.

In Christ the King,



Rev. Fr. Vicente A. Griego
Rector, Holy Cross Seminary



Collecting wood in the Australian Bush

Announcements:

- **A twelve lecture instructional course on St. Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion to Mary*** is being offered by Holy Cross Seminary. The seven CD series may be purchased online at <http://www.holycrossseminary.com/truedevotion.htm>. Perfect for the month of May!
- **Holy Cross Seminary can email an electronic subscription of the Seminary Newsletter** for all who prefer. If you wish to receive the Seminary Newsletter via email (usually in colour!), please send your request to: website@holycrossseminary.com Please inform us if you wish to continue receiving the printed copy.
- **Ignatian Retreat for 2014** (you may register at retreats@holycrossseminary.com or by post at the addresses listed above):
 - **Men's Ignatian Retreat:** 6-11 January 2014
 - **Ladies' Ignatian Retreat:** 27 January – 1 February 2014
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - 7th June – Solemn High Mass with the Receiving of the Cassock & First Engagements in the Society of St. Pius X.
 - 15th August – Pontifical High Mass with Tonsure & Minor Orders conferred by His Lordship, Bishop Tissier de Mallerais.