

Catechism of the Catholic Church

PART FOUR: CHRISTIAN PRAYER

SECTION ONE: PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER THREE: THE LIFE OF PRAYER

ARTICLE 2: THE BATTLE OF PRAYER

III. FILIAL TRUST

2734 Filial trust is tested - it proves itself - in tribulation.²² The principal difficulty concerns the *prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it "efficacious"?

Why do we complain of not being heard?

2735 In the first place, we ought to be astonished by this fact: when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions. What is the image of God that motivates our prayer: an instrument to be used? or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

2736 Are we convinced that "we do not know how to pray as we ought"?²³ Are we asking God for "what is good for us"? Our Father knows what we need before we ask him,²⁴ but he awaits our petition because the dignity of his children lies in their freedom. We must pray, then, with his Spirit of freedom, to be able truly to know what he wants.²⁵

2737 "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."²⁶ If we ask with a divided heart, we are "adulterers";²⁷ God cannot answer us, for he desires our well-being, our life. "Or do you suppose that it is in vain that the scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?'"²⁸ That our God is "jealous" for us is the sign of how true his love is. If we enter into the desire of his Spirit, we shall be heard.

Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer.²⁹

God wills that our desire should be exercised in prayer, that we may be able to receive what he is prepared to give.³⁰

How is our prayer efficacious?

2738 The revelation of prayer in the economy of salvation teaches us that faith rests on God's action in history. Our filial trust is enkindled by his supreme act: the Passion and Resurrection of his Son. Christian prayer is cooperation with his providence, his plan of love for men.

2739 For St. Paul, this trust is bold, founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us and on the faithful love of the Father who has given us his only Son.³¹ Transformation of the praying heart is the first response to our petition.

2740 The prayer of Jesus makes Christian prayer an efficacious petition. He is its model, he prays in us and with us. Since the heart of the Son seeks only what pleases the Father, how could the prayer of the children of adoption be centered on the gifts rather than the Giver?

2741 Jesus also prays for us - in our place and on our behalf. All our petitions were gathered up, once for all, in his cry on the Cross and, in his Resurrection, heard by the Father. This is why he never ceases to intercede for us with the Father.³² If our prayer is resolutely united with that of Jesus, in trust and boldness as children, we obtain all that we ask in his name, even more than any particular thing: the Holy Spirit himself, who contains all gifts.

IV. PERSERVERING IN LOVE

2742 "Pray constantly . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."³³ St. Paul adds, "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints."³⁴ For "we have not been commanded to work, to keep watch and to fast constantly, but it has been laid down that we are to pray without ceasing."³⁵ This tireless fervor can come only from love. Against our dullness and laziness, the battle of prayer is that of humble, trusting, and persevering love. This love opens our hearts to three enlightening and life-giving facts of faith about prayer.

2743 *It is always possible to pray:* The time of the Christian is that of the risen Christ who is with us always, no matter what tempests may arise.³⁶ Our time is in the hands of God:

It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop, . . . while buying or selling, . . . or even while cooking.³⁷

2744 *Prayer is a vital necessity.* Proof from the contrary is no less convincing: if we do not allow the Spirit to lead us, we fall back into the slavery of sin.³⁸ How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from him?

Nothing is equal to prayer; for what is impossible it makes possible, what is difficult, easy. . . . For it is impossible, utterly impossible, for the man who prays eagerly and invokes God ceaselessly ever to sin.³⁹

Those who pray are certainly saved; those who do not pray are certainly damned.⁴⁰

2745 Prayer and *Christian life are inseparable*, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."⁴¹

He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.⁴²

22 Cf. *Rom* 5:3-5. 23 *Rom* 8:26. 24 Cf. *Mt* 6:8. 25 Cf. *Rom* 8:27. 26 *Jas* 4:3; cf. the whole context: *Jas* 4:1-10; 1:5-8; 5:16.
27 *Jas* 4:4. 28 *Jas* 4:5. 29 Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 34:PG 79,1173. 30 St. Augustine, *Ep.* 130,8,17:PL 33,500.
31 Cf. *Rom* 10:12-13; 8:26-39. 32 Cf. *Heb* 5:7; 7:25; 9:24 33 *1 Thess* 5:17; *Eph* 5:20. 34 *Eph* 6:18.
35 Evagrius Ponticus, *Pract.* 49:PG 40,1245C. 36 Cf. *Mt* 28:20; *Lk* 8:24. 37 St. John Chrysostom, *Ecloga de oratione* 2:PG 63,585.
38 Cf. *Gal* 5:16-25. 39 St. John Chrysostom, *De Anna* 4,5:PG 54,666. 40 St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Del gran Mezzo della preghiera*.
41 *Jn* 15:16-17. 42 Origen, *De orat.* 12:PG 11,452c.