



The Prayer

MOTHER CLELIA

“Prayer is everything that is most sublime in religion: it is a lifting up of our mind and our heart to heaven; it is an intimate conversation with God; it is the union of the soul with the Supreme Good; it is the occupation of the Angels in paradise permitted to human beings on earth; it is the life of heaven begun here on earth. With prayer we lift ourselves above all that is passing... Understanding that God alone is all, we abandon ourselves to Him, we pour our hearts into His in order to love and serve only Him, to live for Him alone.”

(MOTHER CLELIA)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MOTHER CLELIA

INTRODUCTION

Salvation history begins the moment a person is capable of accepting God's revelation and responding to it with one's life and prayer. In philosophy, the human being is defined as "homo orans," because he adores, listens and responds to God, giving truth to his own existence. Without prayer, we cannot arrive at Truth nor discover our own name. We cannot find our identity if we do not turn to God, the origin and ultimate end of all life.

Prayer was so important and necessary for Mother Clelia that she wrote: “Prayer for me is indispensable, like bread, air, life itself.”

PRAYER: A RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE WITH GOD, LIVING AND REAL

It is always God who initiates the encounter with us. It is He who awakens the desire in our hearts; it is He who first calls us by name...and then waits. What St. Augustine said remains ever true: “You would not have looked for God if He had not first looked for you.”

When we take the first steps to begin to pray, we are immediately aware of a presence— a Divine Presence—that feels close, intimate, familiar, and confident. In an ever so slow and peaceful way, it begins as a one-on-one, a face-to-face encounter that removes every fear and concern, and opens the heart to a full and unlimited trust, as between friends.

Mother Clelia herself testifies to this:

Today, Jesus makes me feel an unlimited trust and confidence in His divine Heart, and I enjoy it very much, knowing that this confidence is the key that opens the treasures of His infinite mercy. Leave me your Love, O Jesus...it is all I want. Everything else for me is nothing. I want to love you with all the intensity of my heart, loving nothing else but you, and loving all other things in You and for You.

Again she says:

I do not need any book or method to pray, nor efforts of mind and will. As long as I enter gently into myself, there I find God, I find peace, sometimes full of sweetness, sometimes arid, but always intimate and real.

It is precisely in this “privileged abode” of the heart that the mystery of Love is celebrated.

Fr. Ubaldo Terrinoni, confirms:

It is enough “to enter serenely, humbly, and confidently into that Heart that welcomes you as spouse. Enter with your soul and with all your being in order to enjoy His love. Enter (as Pope John Paul II adds) by ‘reading the mystery of the Heart of the Crucified, who was and is the Son of God.’ Enter to comprehend with St. Paul “the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s Love, which surpasses all knowledge.”

Prayer is not about ideas or things or impersonal powers, but about a personal God who makes his way into our history to walk with us. It is an experience that is

living and unique. Those who pray know that they stand before the Author of their lives and their history, before the One who loves them unconditionally.

Mother Clelia writes:

What is, therefore, more sublime and necessary to our prayer time? "If my meditation," says David, "had not been Your holy law, O my God, then I might have perished in my afflictions. I will never cease to meditate on your judgments because that for me is the source of life."

Prayer and our lives

Prayer is a trusting and dramatic dialogue with God who is present. The faith that gives strength to prayer can be summed up as follows: "You are...and I am, thanks to You...and You invite me to live with You." The Christian who prays knows what eternal life is: to know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus, to know Christ as true God and true man and as mediator between us and the Father, and to believe in the Holy Spirit who prays in us.

Fr. Terrinoni writes:

For Mother Clelia, to say "Heart of Jesus" is to affirm with certainty: the Heart of Jesus is here before you, and open for you. It is the refuge of chosen souls, it is the source in which one finds "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It is the wedding hall in which the union is celebrated. This Heart now turns to you and invites you to enter and begin the pilgrimage of Love, to allow you to bathe in his love, and let yourself be made anew.

Mother Clelia clarifies this, addressing her spiritual daughters:

Remember, however, that we have to commit ourselves to the preservation of a pure conscience and the mortification of our passions, because those who are not willing to sacrifice themselves and improve their own behavior cannot expect to attain good fruits from this holy exercise [of prayer].

Do not forget: anyone who does not want to let go of earthly things is not in a position to lift his spirit to heaven. We must truly seek intimacy with God and utterly break away from a dissipated life that is lost in useless thoughts, in distractions and that easily gives to one's sensitive nature all that it demands. To be dissipated all day and to be recollected in prayer are two incompatible things. The keyword so dear to Mother Clelia is "docility," which is a keen sensitivity to the dynamic power of love that enlightens, warms, moves and transforms. In a simple way, she transmits to us her experience of it: "I find my delights in keeping myself centered in God, in keeping myself in His divine presence...I feel that my

heart is continually united to God and that He lets it be led in all things by His Spirit.”

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER, EVEN IN GREAT TRIALS

Mother Foundress, who for many years remained in His Heart while living the sorrow of trials and the pain of love, has some marvelous expressions for this experience of “abiding”: “the only refuge for tired and tried souls,” “the only ship that no storm can sink,” “an ocean of love,” “an ocean of peace,” “mystical abode,” “blessed Ark,” “a furnace of love,” “a lasting dwelling place,” “the depths of divine grace and consolation,” “the sanctuary of peace.”

In a maternal way, she invites one of the Sisters to pray:

We need only God. He alone knows the secret to relieve our dejected hearts, and in Him alone we will always find true comfort for our ills.

Perhaps prayer may have seemed hard at times, but now that your heart is wounded, you feel the need for this soothing balm, which alone can stop the blood that flows from it. Isn't this true? Then abandon yourself trustingly to Jesus. The prayer of the afflicted, sprinkled with tears, has great power over that tender and loving Heart.

CONCLUSION

We can state clearly that prayer is indispensable for living the theological virtues in a heroic way. For Mother Clelia, it was a profoundly spousal experience, as necessary as the air she breathed, made ardent with a love impassioned by and lived exclusively for “God alone.”

In the introduction to the collection of the Prayers of Mother Clelia, we read: “In the book, ‘The Sanctuary of the Heart,’ we find an altar, and on this altar is the soul of Mother Clelia, her very being that she offers with every breath and with every beat of her heart. It is the heart of Mother Clelia in union with the Heart of Jesus.”

Let us pray together in her words:

I have a God in me, and thus I am a temple, a sanctuary,
an altar which holds the divinity
surrounded by countless celestial spirits
who adore him and render him their homage.

I unite myself to you, O Blessed Spirits,

I love and adore my Jesus with you.

O celestial Spirits, make up for the weakness of my sentiments
with the purity and the ardor of your homage and of your love,
let me unite my heart and my spirit to yours

to form a single heart and a single spirit,
to think of Jesus, to adore him, to love him, to praise him,
if not as much as he deserves, at least as much as I am able.

For personal reflection:

- 1. After having considered Mother Clelia's experience of prayer, how do I describe and validate my prayer life?**
- 2. Looking at the reality of my life and of all that surrounds me, how does her prayer inspire me to live?**