



MISSIONARIES OF ST. CHARLES
SCALABRINIANS
SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO PROVINCE

Symposium on Spirituality

Papers on Scalabrinian Spirituality

By Fr. Walter Tonelotto, c.s.

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You may recall, from reading our *October/December, 2022* Newsletter, that, in preparation for the *October, 2023* symposium on Scalabrinian Spirituality, we will be sending you some of the papers of Fr. Walter Tonelotto.

Again, I invite you to make time for personal spiritual reading. It will provide an opportunity to grow in the light of our Founder. We encourage Area and Interest Group meetings to deepen our understanding of, and appreciation for, the spirituality of St. J. B. Scalabrini, with special focus on our charism as it has thrived since the foundation of our Congregation.

Fr. Angelo Plodari, c.s.
Provincial Superior

On Prayer

*Pastoral Letter of Monsignor Bishop of Piacenza,
for Holy Lent of the year 1905*

Prayer is the infallible remedy against the moral and social evils caused in Europe by the struggle that naturalism and rationalism wage against religion.

Anyone who sincerely loves the public good cannot fail to love religion, which is the source, the guarantee, the solid and true foundation of the public good.

Unfortunately, however, it is held in contempt today; vilified by some deluded persons and fought against by others. Human efforts are made to reduce the Church to impotence, to replace Christianity with naturalism, the cult of faith with the cult of reason, the so-called independent morality with Catholic death, the progress of the spirit with that of matter.

With **an education** that is intended to be entirely secular, from the very first elements we try to raise a youth not only ignorant of any religious idea, but hostile to God, to Jesus Christ, to the Church.

Meanwhile very **serious evils** are inundating everything; in families there is a lack of respect for paternal authority; in the cities we see growing angry wrath and internal discord; in the States, which have now become powerless; unrest and revolts increase; everywhere scandals, miseries, threats, crimes, ruins.

The obligation, the excellence and the efficacy of prayer are precisely what I intend to remind you herewith, my brothers and children.

The obligation of prayer, as an act of worship and part of religion is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that it has survived all catastrophes and dates back to the origin of the world.

Prayer is for us, reasonable creatures, a groaning, instinctive, irresistible need.

Paganism itself, even the most barbarous nations themselves, although they did not have an adequate concept of God, wrapped as they were in the darkness of idolatry, raised prayers and sacrifices to Him everywhere and always.

In the midst of this silent and mute creation, a tongue was missing to bless the Lord, a heart was missing to love him. God created man and by enlivening his lips, he wanted **all of nature to find a voice that was like the hymn of adoration and thanksgiving.**

Beloved Ones, when we pray, it is the universe that prays in us and with us; it is the universe of which we are a compendium, it is all creatures that take on a voice and a soul, praise, bless, thank, glorify, they exalt the One who brought them out of nothing. "*Benedicite omnia opera Domini, Domino*".

And here is my brothers and children the need to invoke Him; this is why **the Church**, which watches over our needs not only spiritually but also temporally with maternal goodness, **has blessings and prayers for all that concerns the present life.**

Only one thing is necessary, and it is necessary for everyone, says Jesus Christ in the Gospel: to live according to his law and be saved.

No, they are not enough, as so many deluded poor people falsely give themselves to believe, **the light of reason is not enough, natural sentiment is not enough**, natural fairness is not enough. *"Without Me, you can do nothing"*.

The end of man transcends all creation, God being clearly seen in himself.

In order to reach this superior end, a **supernatural force is needed in us, divine grace is needed.** We need divine grace to believe in revealed truths, we need divine grace to detest our faults as is fitting.

Grace and prayer are inseparable, writes St. Jerome. Denying the need for grace is as good as denying the need for prayer and admitting the need for grace is as good as admitting the need for prayer. Sant' Alfonso de Liguori said: "Those who pray are saved, those who do not pray are damned".

And Jesus himself said: "Watch and pray; ask, seek, insist; you must always pray; without intermission pray; pray at all times in all places".

Even the example of **our mother Church** must persuade us, dear ones, of the need for prayer. And she prays for herself, prays for her children who struggle in this world, prays for those who, having left this life, moan in Purgatory; she prays for sinners for conversion, for the just for hope, for the dying for final victory, for all the grace of eternal salvation.

Not only on earth but also **in heaven** does the Catholic Church pray.

What is prayer? It is the elevation of the spirit to God, the source of life, it is the mysterious bond of that marvelous commerce which exists between man and his eternal maker.

Prayer lifts us to a height where the devil cannot reach us.

It places us under the wings of God.

Prayer and light, warmth, nourishment, comfort, the life of the human soul. The soul suffers and fails if it does not breathe this heavenly air.

The soul, only when it is pure, rises naturally.

Thus noble souls, delicate souls, great souls leap with delight into this divine ether of prayer.

Anyone who doesn't pray has no soul; either he doesn't understand, or he doesn't hear, or he doesn't love.

It is prayer that forms the martyrs and heroes of Jesus Christ.

Prayer makes man greater than himself, transfigures him, sublimates him, divinizes him.

Prayer is undoubtedly the noblest and most glorious function that man can exercise in this world and gives it a sovereign greatness.

Not only does it put us in intimate relationship with everything that is true, beautiful, holy in heaven and on earth, but it also makes us sharers in **God's friendship**, in his most **tender effusions**, in the most **intimate confidences** of him.

Prayer is the bond of all humanity. And above any obstacle, prayer establishes an electric current that goes from brothers to brothers, and passing through the heart of God, center and hearth of love, forms, one can say, **of all hearts a one heart, one family of all families.**

Yes, it is precisely from this contact with the divinity that man draws superhuman energy.

Prayer when it is humble not only equals, but surpasses, I would almost say, the very power of God.

God is omnipotent, says the prophet, and who can resist him?

Prayer, I answer.

With this **suppliant omnipotence**, as Saint Bernard calls it, it seems that God himself wanted, in a certain way, to protect himself.

In the face of prayer God does not want, he does not know, he cannot resist for long.

St. Augustine said it: **"Prayer is man's strength and God's weakness"**. When a man is a father, he does not know how to refuse his children anything, precisely because he is a father; and the One from whom all paternity descends, the One who is good, infinitely good, indeed goodness itself, could he refuse us anything, when we turn to him as supplicating children?

Christ himself tells us: ask, it will be given to you; seek and you will find, go to the door and knock and it will be opened for you. Whatever you ask my Father in my name, He will give it to you. Whatever you ask in my name I will do. Whatever you ask, praying, have faith and you will see it fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

It would remain for me to tell you about the different forms of prayer, the conditions and qualities that prayer must have, the object, the subject and the external circumstances of prayer, finally the objections, or I will say better, the excuses that many give for evade this great debt. But of that, God willing, another time. Now it's time for me to finish this mine.