

First Reading: Acts 1:12-14

Response: "**Alleluia/ am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living**" (Ps.26:13)

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 26:1,4,7,8

Second Reading: 1 Peter 4:13-16

Gospel: John 17:1-11

How do you pray? When is your most prayerful moment? What is prayer?

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a monologue with one person doing all the talking. It is dialogue, both sides talking and listening. It means being present to each other.

God is always present to us in the Risen Lord, full *Shekinah* (Presence). He left us, changing his physical presence into a deeper spiritual one, to be with us in mind, heart and soul.

We see the apostles walking and talking with the Lord after his resurrection. This is the early Church in communion with God, "**joined in continuous prayer**" (Acts 1:14).

Note mention of the fact that "**Mary the mother of Jesus**" (Acts 1:14) was there "**and with his brothers**", indicative of the Church at prayer as the family of God, the Body of Christ.

God responds to *Qahal Yahweh* (קהל י הוה), his people at prayer. They cry out to him: "**O Lord, hear my voice when I call**" (Ps.26:7) and are "**sure to see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living**" (Ps.26:13). Alleluia.

Before the resurrection, apostles saw Jesus in prayer with his Father, one in the Spirit. Jesus promises apostles that he and the Father will share this Spirit with them, the Spirit of prayer.

Jesus prays for his glory that it may be for the glory of God, "**Father, glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you**" (Jn. 17:1). His mother prayed that her spirit magnifies the Lord.

Jesus prays also for his people, "**You gave them to me, I pray for them**" (Jn. 17:9). We think of Christ as God's gift to his people, here we see the people as God's gift to Christ and he prays for them.

Christ accepts us, his people. How much do we accept him? Peter reminds us that "**it is a blessing to be insulted for bearing the name of Christ**" (1 Pet.4:14).

We can show our acceptance of Christ by praying in his name in the presence of others. "**I have made your name known**" (Jn. 17:6).

A human person at prayer is the greatest beauty of all creation. When St. Catherine of Sienna saw a bright shining light, seemingly brighter than the sun and thought she had come into the awesome presence of God but the Lord told her it was not him. She was in the presence of a person at prayer. The Spirit of God was with her.

It is the Spirit that makes us cry Father, like the Son that binds us together.

We are the image of God, born to pray, to be in conversation with God. "**And eternal life is this: to know the only true God**" (Jn. 17:3). See also below: Theological Reflection on 'Eternal Life.'

The **Gospel** today is part of Jesus' prayer. Reflect and meditate what he is saying.

The **Prayer** of Jesus is rightly called the 'priestly prayer' (Jn. 17) summing up the whole economy of creation and salvation. It fulfils the great petitions of the 'Our Father'. (CCC.2758).

The **Wonder** of prayer is beside the well where we come seeking water: there Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. (CCC.2560).

The **Witness** of prayer is to make time for it, now and always. "**If only you knew the gift of God**" (Jn.4:10), (cf. also CCC. 2560). **N.B.:** CCC means 'Catechism of the Catholic Church.'

FOR THE CHILDREN



What is prayer? Listening and talking to God.

Who is Jesus talking to when he prays today in the gospel?

Think of the times when you pray. E.g. at meals, bedtime, morning, Church, school, etc.

Don't just say words when you pray. Remember God is listening when you talk to him.

Ask others to pray with you too.

FOR TEENAGERS

Read the prayer of Jesus (Jn.14:1-11). **What does he say?** Discuss it.

Prayer is talking to God. Also allow for silent prayer and let God talk to you. Have a dialogue.

Learn how to meditate. Discuss it. "**Have the Spirit of God resting on you**" (1 Pet.4:15).

Make quiet time each day to be with the Lord. These are important moments in spiritual life.

Discuss and encourage others to pray. Psalm 26 reminds us to "**Seek his face**" (Ps.26:8).

RCIA

Mystagogia is a post-Easter catechesis bringing us into a deeper understanding and experience of the divine mysteries and the work of our redemption. The Ascension reminds us of Jesus promise of the Spirit. Spiritual life is linked with prayer. Can we with Christ, praying in the Spirit, say to the Father: "**I have glorified you..and finished the work you want me to do?**" (Jn. 17:4).

LIFE EXPERIENCE

When I was parish priest at St. Joseph's, Cedara, in the 1980's, I was called to the bedside of a dying man in Hilton. He was a writer and a poet. Although born Catholic, he declared himself an atheist, claiming to see things as they are, immaculate perception like Zarathustra who "played dice with God on the divine table of the earth"⁽ⁱ⁾ but now he was guessing the outcome of his gamble. He wondered if a prayer might help. But what is prayer without Spirit and faith, for one who has "**thrown his pearl to swine**" (Matt.7:6)? He insisted I visit him and he listened to my prayers. I was at his bedside in his final moments and he whispered "God help me." He received the last sacraments and I conducted his funeral in St. Mary's, Pietermaritzburg. I will mention his name, because many were at his funeral, especially from the university where he once taught.

His name is Alan Thwaite. No doubt, now he has a full life in the Spirit.

(i) NIETZSCHE Friedrich. **Thus Spake Zarathustra**. Wordsworth Classics, Ware Herts. UK. 1997. pgs.121,223.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Once when I was ill, Angelina and her religious class came to visit me. Interestingly, the little children decided to touch me (lay hands on me), asking God to please make their priest well again. It was the best medicine I ever received. I had always seen myself blessing children. That day the children blessed me. "***The Spirit blows where it will***" (Jn.3:8)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: 'Eternal Life'

Jesus says "***eternal life is this: to know the only true God***" (Jn.17:2). The way to know God is to "***know Jesus Christ whom you have sent***" (Jn.14:3). How can we know Christ? In the Church on which he breathed his Spirit, passing on all that the Father gave him. This is the Tradition where we hear his word, touch him, understand his teaching and give witness to him. Eternal life then does not simply come at the end of time. It begins now with Baptism, a life in the Spirit. It involves having a personal relationship with God, loving and serving him and his own, especially the poor and the needy. This is true life and the meaning of Iranaeus' words, Δοξα Θεου ανθρωπος μεστος, (*Doxa Theou anthropos mestos*), the glory of God is a human fully alive⁽ⁱ⁾, the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer "***I in them am glorified***" (Jn. 17:10).

(i) IRANAEUS: 'AGAINST HERESIES' (Contra Haereses) Book 4: 20, 7.

Watchword: "***I have glorified you on earth***" (Jn. 17:4)

Hebrew: אַנִּי פִּאֲרַתִּיךְ בָּאָרֶץ

Ani pea'rtika va'arets.

Greek: Ἐγὼ σε ἐδοξάσα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

Ego se edoxasa epi tes ges.

Latin: Ego te clarificavi super terram.

Portuguese: Eu glorifiquei-te na terra.

Spanish: Yo te he glorificado en la tierra.

French: J'ai manifeste ta gloire sur la terre.

German: Ich habe dich verherrlicht auf Erden.

Afrikaans: Ek het U op die aarde verheerlik.

Zulu: Ngikudumisile emhlabeni.

Xhosa: Ndibubonakalisile ubungangamsha bakho ehlabathini.

Sotho: Ke o tlotlisitse lefatsheng.

Irish: Thug mise gloir duit ar talamh.

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CATECHETICS

Lesson 24:

REASONS FOR 'THE PEOPLE OF GOD SERIES'

This catechism was produced by the Catechetical Commission of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1970. Before then there was not much in the South African field of catechetics. Mostly in use was the penny catechism (question/answer, dogmatic approach). More enterprising catechists imported programmes from overseas or even improvised their own. On the whole, lessons were rather stereotyped without much adaptation.

The South African bishops acknowledged the need for a South African catechism. This catechism would consider especially the following points:-

1. **Developments and Changes** in the world and in the Church: To express a renewed understanding of a changing world in the spirit of Vatican II, a council of renewal.

2. **New insights of theology and new understanding of faith.** The mission of the Church embraces the whole 'People of God.' The whole Church is missionary and this includes catechesis which is the responsibility of every Christian. More emphasis is placed on parents with regards to instruction of their children and the family life of the Church.
 - The **Risen Lord** is the central point of catechesis.
 - **Sacraments** are seen as a personal encounter between God and the human person.

3. **Parish Catechesis** is the primary intention of this catechism. However school catechesis and adaptations of home catechesis are also catered for.

4. The **reality of the Southern Hemisphere in relation to the liturgical year.** Overseas catechisms talk about Christmas in the winter and usually begin with Advent. The South African school year begins in January and so follows a different cycle to the north.

5. The **multiracial nature of the Church in South Africa:** The questionable step was taken of opting for one book for children of all ethnic groups with the view of building one 'People of God' (Church) regardless of colour, race and culture, all are sisters and brothers in Christ.
 - Illustrations in the books are multiracial.
 - Great emphasis is placed on the commandment of love.

HOW THE SERIES adapt to the South African situation:

- **Liturgically.** Adapt the Seasons to South Africa.
- **Psychologically.** Different age groups and classes.
- **Biblically.** Make the Bible meaningful to the local situation.
- **Theologically.** To make doctrine understandable and appreciated.

LITURGY

- Catechesis is geared to the liturgy.
- The liturgical feasts are highlighted in the series.
- Liturgical seasons coincide with local geography and calendar.
- It teaches the sacraments and prayer.
- Has various paraliturgical celebrations.

PSYCHOLOGY (Anthropology)

- It has different books for various age groups and grades.
- Lessons work on local situations and life experiences.
- In fact, child's age, condition and mentality are considered.

BIBLE

- Bible stories are prominent, and should be well prepared.
- Make the stories come alive and relate them to life. (drama)

THEOLOGY

- The whole doctrine is spread out in the series.
- The lesson themes themselves are theological.

PEDAGOGY (Methodology)

- Methodologically updated for its time; enabling the teacher to use of the latest.
- Teaching Aids: Chalk talks, flannel, pictures, books, etc.
- Teachers' books offering guidelines and preparation.