



## *The Armor of Faith*

### Topic Summary: Prayer and the Holy Spirit – Part III



*Christian Martyrs Last Prayer - Jean Leon Gerome  
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### **Introduction**

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

**Discussion Opening:** Last week, we discussed the question, when should we pray? Of course, Saint Paul tells us that we should pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which makes the case that any time is a good time to pray. We also discussed the value of daily family prayer and ways we can help our children, grandchildren, and, perhaps, great-grandchildren to develop their own prayer life and appreciate the blessings prayer can bring.

Now that we have answered the question as to when we should pray, we should also address the question as to where we should pray? Of course, that is why we have our panel, so that we might hear their perspective in relation to this question.

**(Question:** So, let me ask, where is it appropriate for us to pray?)

The church, the house of God, is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. It is also the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The choice of a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer. (CCC: 2691)

**(Question:** I'm sure we can all agree that the house of God is a proper place to pray, but what does the Catechism of the Catholic Church mean when it states, "The choice of a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer?"

**(Question:** Article 2691 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church also tells us that the house of God is also the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Why do you think this would be mentioned when defining the house of God as a proper place for prayer?)

*When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Matthew 6:5-6)*

**(Question:** In this scripture, Jesus instructs us that when we pray, we should go to our inner room, close the door, and pray in secret. Does this mean that we should not pray in any place but an inner, closed room?)

(CCC: 2600) The Gospel according to St. Luke emphasizes the action of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of prayer in Christ's ministry. Jesus prays before the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion. He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as "the Christ of God," and again that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted. Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father.

**(Observation:** As we read scripture, we must consider the use of literary form in the context of examples of subsequent behavior. Hyperbole, for example, is a literary form which uses exaggeration to make a point. The point in relation to Matthew 6:5-6 is not to restrict where we pray, that we may only pray in secret, but that the purpose of our prayer is for communication with God, not to receive the accolades of those who may observe our prayer or our worship. If we observe the behavior of Jesus, His prayer was lifted up in many places outside of a closed room. (Luke 22:46, 23:34) We should also consider the behavior of Jesus, in that sometimes His prayer was meant to be heard (John 11:41-42, John 16:33-17:1-26), but for personal prayer, He sought a quiet place (Matthew 26:36, Mark 1:35, Luke 9:18) without distractions.)

For personal prayer, this can be a "prayer corner" with the Sacred Scriptures and icons, in order to be there, in secret, before our Father. In a Christian family, this kind of little oratory fosters

prayer in common. (CCC: 2691)

**(Question:** Having a special place to pray can enable our focus and concentration. Outside of our parish, how might we find and prepare a special place for prayer?)

(CCC: 2601) “He was praying in a certain place and when he had ceased, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” In seeing the Master at prayer the disciple of Christ also wants to pray. By contemplating and hearing the Son, the master of prayer, the children learn to pray to the Father.

**(Question:** Note the words, “In see the Master at prayer, the disciple of Christ also wants to pray.” In this case, the reference to “...the children learn to pray to the Father,” as a metaphor for the disciples learning to lift up prayer to God. In other words, Jesus led by example. What example can we provide to our children, grandchildren or perhaps great-grandchildren?)

(CCC: 2623) On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Promise was poured out on the disciples, gathered “together in one place.” While awaiting the Spirit, “all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer.” The Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls for her everything that Jesus said was also to form her in the life of prayer.

1 When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. 2 And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. 3 Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1-4)

**(Question:** While the disciples were in hiding after the crucifixion of Christ, we see they were gathered together in one place and shared in prayer. While there is occasion for us to pray individually, there is also occasion for us to pray together. What opportunities do we have to join together in prayer and what blessings may we share as we pray together?)

(CCC: 2655) In the sacramental liturgy of the Church, the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit proclaims, makes present, and communicates the mystery of salvation, which is continued in the heart that prays. The spiritual writers sometimes compare the heart to an altar. Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out “in secret,” prayer is always prayer of the Church; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.

**(Question:** In this article of the Catechism, we see that even if we pray in secret, our prayer is always prayer of the church. How can our prayer in secret be considered prayer of the church?)

*4 For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. (Romans 12:4-5)*

**Quotes:**

A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray. A soul which is pure and beautiful must pray, or else it will lose its beauty; a soul which is striving after this purity must pray, or else it will never attain it; a soul which is newly converted must pray, or else it will fall again; a sinful soul, plunged in sins, must pray so that it might rise again. There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer. --St. Faustina

Prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus. --St. Therese of Lisieux

Don't imagine that, if you had a great deal of time, you would spend more of it in prayer. Get rid of that idea; it is no hindrance to prayer to spend your time well. --St. Teresa of Avila

**Final Thoughts:** There are those who believe that while we supposedly enjoy freedom of religion in our nation as guaranteed by the First Amendment, the mere fact that some of us pray is offensive to those who do not believe in prayer, therefore, they make the case that freedom of religion and the freedom to practice our faith is only extended to our homes and our places of worship. In other words, it is Ok that we have freedom to pray and worship, only if we do it in secret.

This is not what our founding fathers had in mind. The First Amendment of the Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." As we read this, this is a restriction upon government and a specific preservation of freedom for the people.

In 1879, the Supreme Court referred to a 1 Jan 1802 letter, from President Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, as a means to insert a concept called the "separation of church and state." Over time, this has been twisted to reduce the protections of our religious freedoms and to open the door for government to restrict our prayer and the practice of our faith. It is often cited by those who wish to re-write the First Amendment to be interpreted as freedom from religion in the public square rather than freedom of religion.

Taken to the extreme, the effort continues and is in progress to sterilize our government of any mention of God. The intent of the founding fathers was to prevent government from restricting, burdening, or persecuting our religious institutions and to prevent the formation of a state run religion. It was never intended that government cannot allow religion to exist in the public square.

I bring this up, because, as court cases mount, people of faith are watching their rights to pray, mention God or the name of Jesus Christ, and to live the conscience or their faith are being eroded. If we remain silent, if we do not speak up and peacefully challenge this, the day will come where our rights to live our faith shall be lost.

Of course, this is a very large topic and I cannot give it justice in these closing moments, but I would like to leave with you the following thought, "While many may endeavor to silence our prayer, they cannot prevent our prayers from being lifted to God." We should remember John 16:33, where Jesus

tells His disciples, “I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage. I have conquered the world.”

**Wrap Up:** Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our discussion of Prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Prayer and the Holy Spirit – Part IV