

PART FOUR

CHRISTIAN PRAYER

SECTION ONE

PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

2558 “Great is the mystery of the faith!” The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles’ Creed (*Part One*) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (*Part Two*), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (*Part Three*). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.¹

Prayer as God’s gift

2559 “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”² But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or “out of the depths” of a humble and contrite heart?³ He who humbles himself will be exalted;⁴ *humility* is the foundation of prayer. Only when 2613 we humbly acknowledge that “we do not know how to pray as we 2763 ought,”⁵ are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. “Man is a beggar before God.”⁶

1 St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Manuscripts autobiographiques*, C 25r.

2 St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C.

3 *Psalms* 130:1.

4 Cf. *Luke* 18:9-14.

5 *Romans* 8:26.

6 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 56, 6, 9: PL 38, 381.

2560 “If you knew the gift of God!”⁷ The wonder of prayer is revealed 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.⁸

2561 “You would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”⁹ Paradoxically our prayer of petition is a response to the plea of the living God: “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water!”¹⁰ Prayer is the response of faith to the free promise of salvation and also a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God.¹¹

Prayer as covenant

2562 Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the *heart* that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.

2563 The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place “to which I withdraw.” The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth,
 2699 where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because
 1696 as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.

7 Jn 4:10.

8 Cf. St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 64, 4: PL 40, 56.

9 Jn 4:10.

10 Jer 2:13.

11 Cf. Jn 7:37-39; 19:28; Isa 12:3; 51:1; Zech 12:10; 13:1.

2564 Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man.

Prayer as communion

2565 In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit."¹² Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ.¹³ Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love.¹⁴

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12 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, 16, 9: PG 35, 945.

13 Cf. *Rom* 6:5.

14 Cf. *Eph* 3:18-21.

faith, with filial boldness. He calls them to vigilance and invites them to present their petitions to God in his name. Jesus Christ himself answers prayers addressed to him.

- 2622 The prayers of the Virgin Mary, in her Fiat and Magnificat, are characterized by the generous offering of her whole being in faith.

ARTICLE 3 IN THE AGE OF THE CHURCH

2623 On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Promise was poured out on the disciples, gathered "together in one place."⁹² While awaiting the Spirit, "all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer."⁹³ The Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls for her everything that Jesus said⁹⁴ was also to form her in the life of prayer.

2624 In the first community of Jerusalem, believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers."⁹⁵ This sequence is characteristic of the Church's prayer: founded on the apostolic faith; authenticated by charity; nourished in the Eucharist.

2625 In the first place these are prayers that the faithful hear and read in the Scriptures, but also that they make their own—especially those of the Psalms, in view of their fulfillment in Christ.⁹⁶ The Holy Spirit, who thus keeps the memory of Christ alive in his Church at prayer, also leads her toward the fullness of truth and inspires new formulations expressing the unfathomable mystery of Christ at work in his Church's life, sacraments, and mission. These formulations are developed in the great liturgical and spiritual traditions. The *forms of prayer* revealed in the apostolic and canonical Scriptures remain normative for Christian prayer.

92 Acts 2:1.

93 Acts 1:14.

94 Cf. Jn 14:26.

95 Acts 2:42.

96 Cf. Lk 24:27, 44.

I. BLESSING AND ADORATION

- 1078 **2626** *Blessing* expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.
- 1083 **2627** Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer *ascends* in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father—we bless him for having blessed us;⁹⁷ it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that *descends* through Christ from the Father—he blesses us.⁹⁸
- 2096-2097 **2628** *Adoration* is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us⁹⁹ and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory,"¹⁰⁰ respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God.¹⁰¹ Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love
- 2559 blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications.

II. PRAYER OF PETITION

- 2629** The vocabulary of supplication in the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even "struggle in prayer."¹⁰² Its most usual form, because the most spontaneous, is petition: by prayer of petition we express awareness of our relationship with God. We are creatures who are
- 396 not our own beginning, not the masters of adversity, not our own last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him.
- 2630** The New Testament contains scarcely any prayers of lamentation, so frequent in the Old Testament. In the risen Christ the Church's
- 2090 petition is buoyed by hope, even if we still wait in a state of expectation and must be converted anew every day. Christian petition, what St. Paul calls "groaning," arises from another depth, that of creation "in labor pains" and that of ourselves "as we wait for the redemption of our bodies.

97 Cf. Eph 1:3-14; 2 Cor 1:3-7; 1 Pet 1:3-9.

98 Cf. 2 Cor 13:14; Rom 15:5-6, 13; Eph 6:23-24.

99 Cf. Ps 95:1-6.

100 Ps 24, 9-10.

101 Cf. St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 62, 16: PL 36, 757-758.

102 Cf. Rom 15:30; Col 4:12.

For in this hope we were saved.¹⁰³ In the end, however, “with sighs too deep for words” the Holy Spirit “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”¹⁰⁴

2631 The first movement of the prayer of petition is *asking forgiveness*, 2838 like the tax collector in the parable: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”¹⁰⁵ It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that “we receive from him whatever we ask.”¹⁰⁶ Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.

2632 Christian petition is centered on the desire and *search for the* 2816 *Kingdom to come*, in keeping with the teaching of Christ.¹⁰⁷ There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. 1942 This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community.¹⁰⁸ It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer.¹⁰⁹ By prayer every 2854 baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom.

2633 When we share in God’s saving love, we understand that 2830 *every need* can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name.¹¹⁰ It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray *at all times*.¹¹¹

III. PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

2634 Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners.¹¹² He is “able for all time to save those 432 who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make

103 Rom 8:22-24.

104 Rom 8:26.

105 Lk 18:13.

106 1 Jn 3:22; cf. 1:7-2:2.

107 Cf. Mt 6:10, 33; Lk 11:2, 13.

108 Cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3.

109 Cf. Rom 10:1; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:3-6; 4:3-4, 12.

110 Cf. Jn 14:13.

111 Cf. Jas 1:5-8; Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:16-17; 1 Thess 5:17-18.

112 Cf. Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; 1 Tim 2:5-8.

intercession for them."¹¹³ The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us . . . and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."¹¹⁴

2571 **2635** Since Abraham, intercession—asking on behalf of another—
has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God's mercy. In the age
of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ's, as an ex-
pression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays
looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of oth-
2577 ers," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm.¹¹⁵

2636 The first Christian communities lived this form of fellow-
ship intensely.¹¹⁶ Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his
ministry of preaching the Gospel¹¹⁷ but also intercedes for them.¹¹⁸
The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: "for all
1900 men, for kings and all who are in high positions," for persecutors,
1037 for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel.¹¹⁹

IV. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

224 **2637** Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church
which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully
1328 what she is. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation
free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to
the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the
2603 Body participates in that of their Head.

2638 As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can
become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often
begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always
present in it: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will
of God in Christ Jesus for you"; "Continue steadfastly in prayer,
being watchful in it with thanksgiving."¹²⁰

113 *Heb* 7:25.

114 *Rom* 8:26-27.

115 *Phil* 2:4; cf. *Acts* 7:60; *Lk* 23:28, 34.

116 Cf. *Acts* 12:5; 20:36; 21:5; 2 *Cor* 9:14.

117 Cf. *Eph* 6:18-20; *Col* 4:3-4; 1 *Thess* 5:25.

118 Cf. 2 *Thess* 1:11; *Col* 1:3; *Phil* 1:3-4.

119 1 *Tim* 2:1; cf. *Rom* 12:14; 10:1.

120 1 *Thess* 5:18; *Col* 4:2.

V. PRAYER OF PRAISE

2639 Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God 213 in faith before seeing him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God,¹²¹ testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the "one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist."¹²²

2640 St. Luke in his gospel often expresses wonder and praise at the marvels of Christ and in his *Acts of the Apostles* stresses them as actions of the Holy Spirit: the community of Jerusalem, the invalid healed by Peter and John, the crowd that gives glory to God for that, and the pagans of Pisidia who "were glad and glorified the word of God."¹²³

2641 "[Address] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart."¹²⁴ Like the inspired writers of the New Testament, the first Christian communities read the Book of Psalms in a new way, singing in it the mystery of Christ. In the newness of the Spirit, they also composed hymns and canticles in the light 2587 of the unheard-of event that God accomplished in his Son: his Incarnation, his death which conquered death, his Resurrection, and Ascension to the right hand of the Father.¹²⁵ Doxology, the praise of God, arises from this "marvelous work" of the whole economy of salvation.¹²⁶

2642 The *Revelation* of "what must soon take place," the *Apocalypse*, is borne along by the songs of the heavenly liturgy¹²⁷ but also by the intercession of the "witnesses" (martyrs).¹²⁸ The prophets and the saints, all 1137 those who were slain on earth for their witness to Jesus, the vast throng of those who, having come through the great tribulation, have gone before us into the Kingdom, all sing the praise and glory of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb.¹²⁹ In communion with them, the Church on earth also sings these songs with faith in the midst of trial. By means of petition and intercession, faith hopes against all hope and gives thanks to the "Father of lights," from whom "every perfect gift" comes down.¹³⁰ Thus faith is pure praise.

121 Cf. *Rom* 8:16.

122 *1 Cor* 8:6.

123 *Acts* 2:47; 3:9; 4:21; 13:48.

124 *Eph* 5:19; *Col* 3:16.

125 Cf. *Phil* 2:6-11; *Col* 1:15-20; *Eph* 5:14; *1 Tim* 3:16; 6:15-16; *2 Tim* 2:11-13.

126 Cf. *Eph* 1:3-14; *Rom* 16:25-27; *Eph* 3:20-21; *Jude* 24-25.

127 Cf. *Rev* 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12.

128 *Rev* 6:10.

129 Cf. *Rev* 18:24; 19:1-8.

130 *Jas* 1:17.

2643 The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer: it is "the pure offering" of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God's name¹³¹ and, according to the traditions of East and West, it
 1330 is *the* "sacrifice of praise."

IN BRIEF

- 2644 The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls to her all that Jesus said also instructs her in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.
- 2645 Because God blesses the human heart, it can in return bless him who is the source of every blessing.
- 2646 Forgiveness, the quest for the Kingdom, and every true need are objects of the prayer of petition.
- 2647 Prayer of intercession consists in asking on behalf of another. It knows no boundaries and extends to one's enemies.
- 2648 Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter for thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one's whole life: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (*1 Thess* 5:18).
- 2649 Prayer of praise is entirely disinterested and rises to God, lauds him, and gives him glory for his own sake, quite beyond what he has done, but simply because HE IS.
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131 Cf. *Mal* 1:11.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRADITION OF PRAYER

2650 Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within “the believing and praying Church,”¹ the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray. 75

2651 The tradition of Christian prayer is one of the ways in which the tradition of faith takes shape and grows, especially through the contemplation and study of believers who treasure in their hearts the events and words of the economy of salvation, and through their profound grasp of the spiritual realities they experience.² 94

ARTICLE 1

AT THE WELLSPRINGS OF PRAYER

2652 The Holy Spirit is the *living water* “welling up to eternal life”³ in the heart that prays. It is he who teaches us to accept it at its source: Christ. Indeed in the Christian life there are several wellsprings where Christ awaits us to enable us to drink of the Holy Spirit. 694

The Word of God

2653 The Church “forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (*Phil* 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. . . . Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For ‘we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.’”⁴ 133 1100

2654 The spiritual writers, paraphrasing *Matthew* 7:7, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer: “Seek in reading and you will find in

1 DV 8.

2 Cf. DV 8.

3 *Jn* 4:14.

4 DV 25; cf. *Phil* 3:8; St. Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum* 1, 20, 88: PL 16, 50.

meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation."⁵

The Liturgy of the Church

1073 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
368 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,"⁶ prayer is always prayer *of the Church*; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.⁷

1812-1829 The theological virtues

2656 One enters into prayer as one enters into liturgy: by the narrow gate of *faith*. Through the signs of his presence, it is the Face of the Lord that we seek and desire; it is his Word that we want to hear and keep.

2657 The Holy Spirit, who instructs us to celebrate the liturgy in expectation of Christ's return, teaches us to pray in *hope*. Conversely, the prayer of the Church and personal prayer nourish hope in us. The psalms especially, with their concrete and varied language, teach us to fix our hope in God: "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry."⁸ As St. Paul prayed: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."⁹

2658 "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's *love* has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."¹⁰ Prayer, formed by the liturgical life, draws everything into the love by which we are loved in Christ and which enables us to
826 respond to him by loving as he has loved us. Love is the source of

5 Guigo the Carthusian, *Scala Paradisi*: PL 40, 998.

6 Cf. Mt 6:6.

7 GILH 9.

8 Ps 40:2.

9 Rom 15:13.

10 Rom 5:5.

prayer; whoever draws from it reaches the summit of prayer. In the words of the Curé of Ars:

I love you, O my God, and my only desire is to love you until the last breath of my life. I love you, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving you, than live without loving you. I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally. . . . My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.¹¹

"Today"

2659 We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word 1165 of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of *each day*, to make prayer 2837 spring up from us. Jesus' teaching about praying to our Father is in the same vein as his teaching about providence:¹² time is in the Father's hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not 305 yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: "O that *today* you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts."¹³

2660 Prayer in the events of each day and each moment is one of the secrets of the kingdom revealed to "little children," to the servants of Christ, to the poor of the Beatitudes. It is right and good 2546 to pray so that the coming of the kingdom of justice and peace may 2632 influence the march of history, but it is just as important to bring the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations; all forms of prayer can be the leaven to which the Lord compares the kingdom.¹⁴

IN BRIEF

2661 By a living transmission—Tradition—the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray.

2662 The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.

11 St. John Vianney, *Prayer*.

12 Cf. *Mt* 6:11, 34.

13 *Ps* 95:7-8.

14 Cf. *Lk* 13:20-21.

ARTICLE 2

THE WAY OF PRAYER

1201 **2663** In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography. The Magisterium of the Church¹⁵ has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith; it is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning, always in relation to Jesus Christ.

Prayer to the Father

2664 There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it
 2780 has access to the Father only if we pray “in the name” of Jesus. The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father.

Prayer to Jesus

2665 The prayer of the Church, nourished by the Word of God and the celebration of the liturgy, teaches us to pray to the Lord
 451 Jesus. Even though her prayer is addressed above all to the Father, it includes in all the liturgical traditions forms of prayer addressed to Christ. Certain psalms, given their use in the Prayer of the Church, and the New Testament place on our lips and engrave in our hearts prayer to Christ in the form of invocations: Son of God, Word of God, Lord, Savior, Lamb of God, King, Beloved Son, Son of the Virgin, Good Shepherd, our Life, our Light, our Hope, our Resurrection, Friend of mankind. . . .

2666 But the one name that contains everything is the one that
 432 the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: “Jesus,” “YHWH saves.”¹⁶ The name “Jesus” contains all: God and man and
 435 the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray “Jesus” is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and

15 Cf. DV 10.

16 Cf. Ex 3:14; 33:19-23; Mt 1:21.

whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him.¹⁷

2667 This simple invocation of faith developed in the tradition of prayer under many forms in East and West. The most usual formulation, transmitted by the spiritual writers of the Sinai, Syria, and Mt. Athos, is the invocation, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners." It combines the Christological hymn of *Philippians* 2:6-11 with the cry of the publican and the blind men begging for light.¹⁸ By it the heart is opened to human wretchedness and the Savior's mercy. 2616

2668 The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases,¹⁹ but holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience."²⁰ This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus. 435

2669 The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the *Heart of Jesus* just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. Christian prayer loves to follow *the way of the cross* in the Savior's steps. The stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world. 478 1674

"Come, Holy Spirit"

2670 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."²¹ Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace. Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action. 683 2001 1310

If the Spirit should not be worshiped, how can he divinize me through Baptism? If he should be worshiped, should he not be the object of adoration?²²

2671 The traditional form of petition to the Holy Spirit is to invoke the Father through Christ our Lord to give us the Consoler Spirit.²³ Jesus insists on this petition to be made in his name at the very moment

17 *Rom* 10:13; *Acts* 2:21; 3:15-16; *Gal* 2:20.

18 Cf. *Mk* 10:46-52; *Lk* 18:13.

19 Cf. *Mt* 6:7.

20 Cf. *Lk* 8:15.

21 *1 Cor* 12:3.

22 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, 31, 28: PG 36, 165.

23 Cf. *Lk* 11:13.

when he promises the gift of the Spirit of Truth.²⁴ But the simplest and most direct prayer is also traditional, "Come, Holy Spirit," and every liturgical tradition has developed it in antiphons and hymns.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.²⁵

Heavenly King, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, treasure of all good and source of all life, come dwell in us, cleanse and save us, you who are All-Good.²⁶

695 2672 The Holy Spirit, whose anointing permeates our whole being, is the interior Master of Christian prayer. He is the artisan of the living tradition of prayer. To be sure, there are as many paths of prayer as there are persons who pray, but it is the same Spirit acting in all and with all. It is in the communion of the Holy Spirit that Christian prayer is prayer in the Church.

In communion with the holy Mother of God

689 2673 In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church with the Mother of Jesus.²⁷

494 2674 Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties."²⁸ Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (*hodigitria*), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West.

970 2675 Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested
512 in his mysteries. In countless hymns and antiphons expressing this prayer, two movements usually alternate with one another: the
2619 first "magnifies" the Lord for the "great things" he did for his lowly

24 Cf. *Jn* 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.

25 *Lectionary for Mass*: Gospel Acclamation, Pentecost Sunday.

26 Byzantine Liturgy, Pentecost Vespers, Troparion.

27 Cf. *Acts* 1:14.

28 LG 62.

servant and through her for all human beings;²⁹ the second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused.

2676 This twofold movement of prayer to Mary has found a privileged expression in the *Ave Maria*:

Hail Mary [or Rejoice, Mary]: the greeting of the angel Gabriel 722 opens this prayer. It is God himself who, through his angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of his humble servant and to exult in the joy he finds in her.³⁰

Full of grace, the Lord is with thee: These two phrases of the angel's 490 greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice . . . O Daughter of Jerusalem . . . the Lord your God is in your midst."³¹ Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells. She is "the dwelling of God . . . with men."³² Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to him who has come to dwell in her and whom she is about to give to the world.

Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, 435 *Jesus*. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "Filled with the Holy Spirit," Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed."³³ "Blessed is she who believed. . . ."³⁴ Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Abraham, because of his faith, became 146 a blessing for all the nations of the earth.³⁵ Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb."

2677 *Holy Mary, Mother of God*: With Elizabeth we marvel, "And why 495 is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"³⁶ Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word."³⁷ By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

29 Cf. Lk 1:46-55.

30 Cf. Lk 1:48; Zeph 3:17b.

31 Zeph 3:14, 17a.

32 Rev 21:3.

33 Lk 1:41, 48.

34 Lk 1:45.

35 Cf. Gen 12:3.

36 Lk 1:43.

37 Lk 1:38.

Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy," the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing³⁸ to lead us to her son,
1020 Jesus, in paradise.

971, 1674 **2678** Medieval piety in the West developed the prayer of the rosary as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany called the *Akathistos* and the *Paraclesis* remained closer to the choral office in the Byzantine churches, while the Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac traditions preferred popular hymns and songs to the Mother of God. But in the *Ave Maria*, the *theotokia*, the hymns of St. Ephrem or St. Gregory of Narek, the tradition of prayer is basically the same.

967 **2679** Mary is the perfect *Orans* (pray-er), a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes,³⁹ for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. The prayer of the
972 Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope.⁴⁰

IN BRIEF

- 2680** Prayer is primarily addressed to the Father; it can also be directed toward Jesus, particularly by the invocation of his holy name: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners."
- 2681** "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). The Church invites us to invoke the Holy Spirit as the interior Teacher of Christian prayer.
- 2682** Because of Mary's singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done for her, and to entrust supplications and praises to her.
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38 Cf. Jn 19:27.

39 Cf. Jn 19:27.

40 Cf. LG 68-69.