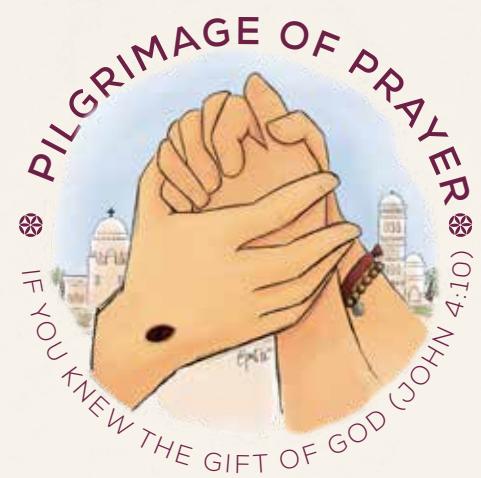


Day 21

Come Holy Spirit

For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- What do I remember from my confirmation?
- What is a prayer I specifically address to the Holy Spirit?
When was the last time I called up the Holy Spirit, and what was the result in my prayer and activity?



Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

*When he comes,
the Spirit of truth
will guide you to all truth.*

John 16:13

Pope Benedict XVI on Prayer of Thanksgiving

One element that the Apostle would have us understand is that prayer should not be seen simply as a good deed done by us to God, our own action. It is, above all, a gift, the fruit of the living presence, the life-giving presence of the Father and of Jesus Christ in us. In the Letter to the Romans, he writes: "Likewise the 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" (8:26). And we know how true it is when the Apostle says: "we do not know how to pray as we ought". We want to pray, but God is far, we do not have the words, the language, to speak with God, not even the thought. We can only open ourselves, set our time at the disposal of God, waiting for him to help us enter into true dialogue. The Apostle says: this very lack of words, this absence of words, even the desire to enter into contact with God is a prayer that the Holy Spirit not only understands,



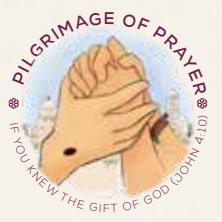
but carries, interprets, to God. It is precisely our weakness which becomes, through the Holy Spirit, true prayer, true contact with God. The Holy Spirit is almost the interpreter who makes God and us ourselves understand what we want to say.

In prayer we experience, more so than in other dimensions of life, our weakness, our poverty, our being created, because we stand before the omnipotence and the transcendence of God. And the more we progress in listening to and dialoguing with God, for prayer becomes the daily breath of our soul, the more we perceive the meaning of our limits, not just before the concrete situations of every day but in our relationship with the Lord too. Growing within us is the need to trust, to trust ever more in him; we understand that “we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26). And it is the Holy Spirit who helps us in our incapacity, who illuminates our minds and warms our hearts, guiding us to turn to God. For St Paul prayer is above all the work of the Spirit in our humanity, taking charge of our weakness and transforming us from men attached to the material world into spiritual men...

And now I would like to underline three consequences in Christian life when we let work within us not the spirit of the world but the Spirit of Christ as the interior principle of our entire action.

First, with prayer animated by the Spirit we are enabled to abandon and overcome every form of fear and slavery, living the authentic freedom of the children of God. Without prayer which every day nourishes our being in Christ, in an intimacy which progressively grows, we find ourselves in the state described by St Paul in his Letter to the Romans: we do not do the good we want, but the evil we do not want (cf. Rom 7:19). And this is the expression of the alienation of human beings, of the destruction of our freedom, the circumstances of our being because of original sin: we want the good that we do not do, and we do what we do not want to do: evil. The Apostle wants to make us understand that it is not primarily our will that frees us from these conditions, nor even the law, but the Holy Spirit. And since “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17), in prayer we experience the freedom given by the Spirit: an authentic freedom, which is freedom from evil and sin for the good and for life, for God... This is true freedom: actually to be able to follow our desire for good, for true joy, for communion with God and to be free from the oppression of circumstances that pull us in other directions.

A second consequence occurs in our life when we let work within us the Spirit of Christ and when the very relationship with God becomes so profound that no other reality or situation affects it. We understand that with prayer we are not liberated from trials and



suffering, but we can live through them in union with Christ, with his suffering, in the hope of also participating in his glory (cf. Rom 8:17). Many times, in our prayer, we ask God to be freed from physical and spiritual evil, and we do it with great trust. However, often we have the impression of not being heard and we may well feel discouraged and fail to persevere. In reality, there is no human cry that is not heard by God, and it is precisely in constant and faithful prayer that we comprehend with St Paul that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). Prayer does not exempt us from trial and suffering... prayer does not exempt us from suffering but prayer does permit us to live through it and face it with a new strength, with the confidence of Jesus, who — according to the Letter to the Hebrews — “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him [God] who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear” (5:7). The answer of God the Father to the Son, to his loud cries and tears, was not freedom from suffering, from the cross, from death, but a much greater fulfillment, an answer much more profound; through the cross and death God responded with the Resurrection of the Son, with new life. Prayer animated by the Holy Spirit leads us too to live every day a journey of life with its trials and sufferings, with the fullness of hope, with trust in God who answers us as he answered the Son.

And, the third, the prayer of the believer opens also to the dimensions of humanity and of all creation, in the expectation that “creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19). This means that prayer, sustained by the Spirit of Christ speaking in the depths of each one of us, does not stay closed in on itself. It is never just prayer for me, but opens itself to sharing the suffering of our time, of others. It becomes intercession for others, and like this deliverance from me, a channel of hope for all creation, the expression of that love of God that is poured into our hearts through the Spirit whom he has given to us (cf. Rom 5:5). And precisely this is a sign of true prayer, which does not end in us, but opens itself to others and like this delivers me, and thus helps in the redemption of the world.

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120516.html

