

## ALL CALLED TO ENCOUNTER CHRIST

Prayer is essentially being connected with God in heart, soul, and mind, with determination and effort. We cannot function as human beings, children of God, unless we are 'plugged into' the power source! Prayer is not only for priests, religious and elderly people. Every human being is called to become one with Jesus Christ, the center of all existence. Everyone is called to be a great Saint!<sup>i</sup>

We know with certitude that God exists through the use of common sense, and by paying attention to ways in which God makes Himself known:

First, applying common sense, we observe the gifts of creation and nature. The macrocosms (solar systems, planets, stars, moons, etc), the microcosms (cells, atoms, electrons, DNA, etc), and the transformation of the human person from conception through natural death into Eternal Life, are so ordered that it would be impossible for such symmetrical splendor to come into existence without a Supreme Creator.<sup>ii</sup>

Second, we must remain attentive to the numerous other ways in which God reveals Himself. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.<sup>iii</sup> "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."<sup>iv</sup> "And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit."<sup>v</sup> With the exception of young Saint John, the Apostles fled when Jesus was crucified. These same Apostles could never have preached the Word throughout the world after His death, unless Jesus did in fact rise from the dead and appear to them and give them the strength of His Holy Spirit.<sup>vi</sup> Jesus established His Church, with Saint Peter, the first Pope, as the Rock.<sup>vii</sup>

Furthermore, God continues to reveal Himself through His myriad of miracles. In addition to documented corroborated miracles in the Bible, we witness countless miracles in our own lives, and in the lives of others. If we tried to list all the miracles, we would need to say with Saint John the Apostle-Evangelist, "I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."<sup>viii</sup> As soon as we accept that God is Truth,<sup>ix</sup> then we can begin to see how God has a magnificent plan for us, and little by little our lives not only make sense, but we realize each person fills an integral specific place in God's mysterious design.

God Himself defines who we are by telling us in the Old Testament, that we are made in His Image and Likeness.<sup>x</sup> Jesus further instructs us regarding the essence of personhood by explaining how we are to love God, with our entire being: Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.<sup>xi</sup> We connect with God naturally, by focusing who we are (God's children with God-given gifts of heart, soul, mind, strength), on Who God is (our Father, our Savior, our Sanctifier). Given that Jesus tells us the essence of personhood is our heart, soul, mind and strength,<sup>xii</sup> and that the Book of Genesis states that we are made in God's image<sup>xiii</sup> - then in a sense, God may be revealing Himself as infinite spiritual loving and merciful Heart (pure feeling), Soul (full perception), Mind (complete understanding) and Strength (intensity of infinite magnitude, without end), seen in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the living perfection of all virtue.<sup>xiv</sup>

Force yourself to think about The Goal in life - Heaven. The hope of Heaven is worth infinitely more than everything! Each one of us must choose 'now': For God (Pro-God, Life, Grace, Heaven), or against God (pro-evil one, death, sin, hell).<sup>xv</sup> With our free will, we decide 'now' where we want to spend eternity.<sup>xvi</sup> Constantly acknowledge God Who Loves us, and be aware that there is an enemy who hates us - stand guard!<sup>xvii</sup> Realize that the least of our acts done in Charity redounds to the profit of all. Whereas every sin harms this communion of saints in the Lord.<sup>xviii</sup>

At all times and in all circumstances, we must know our goal - Heaven - Eternal Union with our Trinitarian God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is necessary to have a 'spiritual plan of life' (battle plan!) to help us along the way. It is good to make a morning offering, attend Mass, go to frequent Confession with spiritual direction (like having a 'personal trainer' for the Soul), pray the rosary, read the Bible, do spiritual reading, and make examination of conscience with the resolution to improve each day.<sup>xix</sup> 'With God all things are possible'<sup>xx</sup> - combining zealous wholehearted personal effort, with God's unfailing Grace from prayer and the Sacraments! When asked how to become a saint, great Saint Thomas Aquinas replied, 'will it'. There is no time to waste - Do All for the Glory of God and Salvation of All Souls, in Christ! Saint John of Avila exhorts:

Brace up your heart to suffer afflictions, for without the battle there is no victory, and the crown is only for the conqueror!

Faithfulness in continually Doing God's Will is the key<sup>xxi</sup> - God's Will right 'now' is that we be the best we can be combining our life of prayer (giving our full loving attention to God), with the talents and gifts that God has given to each one of us, right 'now'. Be the best we can be at all times, for love of God and neighbor: whether as a student, teacher, employee, employer, priest, religious, husband, wife, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin, friend, acquaintance.... Love is joyful complete continuous unconditional sacrifice of self for the sake and good of all others, for the Love and Glory of God and Salvation of All Souls.

Recall in the Gospel that if the blind Bartimaeus had listened to the crowd, he would not have sight.<sup>xxii</sup> Life becomes simplified by listening to Jesus and trying to please Him Alone!!! Do not get sucked into the pagan world - like a deadly riptide in the ocean where 'everyone likes to swim'.... It is wise to remember that 'losing self-control' from drugs/alcohol is a sin because it insults the integrity of personhood, increases the occasion of sin, and offends God by impairing His Gift of Reason. Temporary escapes are illusions - there is only One Truth - and it can be found only in Jesus on the Cross - the temptation is always to come down from the Cross<sup>xxiii</sup> - but if we know Jesus, we know the Answer to All the questions of Life. We must try, with His Grace, to always let Jesus reign within us, within our families, relatives, friends, acquaintances, society, and the whole world - like the ripple effect of the pebble in a lake - remember, with God All Things are Possible - trustingly Ask and Believe!

Each person has a custom-made personal mission (as did Frodo Baggins in Tolkien's, *The Lord of the Rings*), and every person makes a difference. Compare and contrast World Youth Day versus 9/11, for example, - and see the Good, or the evil impact that one person is capable of producing. Alone we are helpless, but we are not alone! We must be persistent in seeking to listen to God and communicate with Him. God Wants us to pester Him - and whoever pesters Him the most, gets the biggest reward!<sup>xxiv</sup>

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, prayer is the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church.<sup>xxv</sup> God is always with us, and we must strive to always be with Him, in His company, giving Him our loving attention!<sup>xxvi</sup>

Mary, the Mother of God, and our Mother,<sup>xxvii</sup> always says Yes to God!<sup>xxviii</sup> We are here praying for the whole Church, the Pope, priests, bishops, cardinals, for the world, and for each one of you, yet you do not see us! There are over 800 Discalced Carmelite Monasteries throughout the world, giving full-time wholehearted attention to God, - and that is one particular religious order. There are countless religious orders with faithful servants of God all over the world, plus heroic individuals, families, communities living in the world - not seen in secular newspapers. God is very much alive, and the Church is alive. Indeed God is full of continuous surprises - keep alert! Jesus is truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity, in every one of the millions of tabernacles all over the world - and He dwells in the souls of those in the state of Grace. In the Measure you Desire Him, you will Find Him.<sup>xxix</sup> We journey together in this combat for Souls - counting on God's Grace, the help of the Holy Family, the Communion of Saints, and on each one of you! May God Bless you everlastingly -

Your grateful devoted Carmelites in Erie, PA, USA

### **Appendix 1 of 3** - *Prayer Descriptions*

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. (Saint Therese of The Child Jesus and The Holy Face 1873 - 1897)

Don't waste energy on things that generate worry, anxiety and anguish. Only one thing is necessary:

Lift up your spirit and love God. (Saint Padre Pio 1887 - 1968)

Truly a crumb of pure love is more precious in the Lord's sight and to the Soul, and of greater benefit to the Church, even though it seems one is doing nothing, than all the other works together.

Do not omit mental prayer for any occupation, for it is the substance of your Soul.

(Saint John of The Cross 1542 - 1591, Doctor of the Church, and Reformer of the Discalced Carmelite Order with Saint Teresa of Jesus)

Prayer, in my opinion, is nothing more than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him whom we know loves us. If you are to be speaking, as is right, with so Great a Lord, it is Good that you consider Whom you are speaking with as well as who you are, at least if you want to be polite.

Clearly understand what His Position is and what yours is. You must show respect.

Mental Prayer consists of being aware and knowing that we are speaking, with Whom we are speaking, and who we ourselves are who dare to speak so much with so great a Lord. To think about this and other similar things, of how little we have served Him and how much we are obliged to serve Him, is Mental Prayer. Don't think it amounts to some other kind of gibberish, and don't let the name frighten you.

To recite the Our Father or the Hail Mary or whatever Prayer you wish is Vocal Prayer. But behold what poor music you produce when you do this without Mental Prayer. In Vocal Prayer and Mental Prayer we can do something ourselves, with the Help of God.

In Contemplation we can do nothing; His Majesty is the One Who does everything, for it is His Work and above our nature. The Soul is being enkindled in Love, and it doesn't understand how it Loves. The Will is enkindled without understanding how. This Good is a Gift from the Lord of earth and Heaven, Who, in sum, gives according to Who He Is. (St Teresa of Jesus (from Avila, Spain; 1515 - 1582)

Reformer of Discalced Carmelite Order, and Doctor of the Church)

Prayer is the greatest gift that one friend can offer another. (Cardinal Cooke)

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. (Alfred Tennyson)

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### **Appendix 2 of 3** - *Inspirational Input*

#### Carmelite

Story of a Soul - St Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face

The Life of St Teresa of Avila - St Teresa of Jesus (from Avila, Spain)

The Way of Perfection - St Teresa of Jesus

The Interior Castle - St Teresa of Jesus

Divine Intimacy - Rev Gabriel of St Mary Magdalene

Letters of St Teresa of Jesus of the Andes - Translated by Rev Michael D Griffin

Aunt Edith (Life of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein) - Susanne M Batzdorff

#### Non-Carmelite

New Testament and Old Testament, Catholic Edition: - Revised Standard Version, or New American Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church - Vatican

The Vatican II Missal - Weekday and Sunday

Welcome to the Catholic Church on CD-Rom - (www.harmonymediainc.com)

My Imitation of Christ - Thomas à Kempis

The Way - St Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer

In Conversation With God - Rev Francis Fernandez

Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence - Rev JP de Caussade, SJ

Consecrated Life (Vita Consecrata) - Pope John Paul II

Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns (Verbi Sponsa) - Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life

Butler's Lives of the Saints - Edited by Rev Herbert Thurston, SJ

The Lord of the Rings - JRR Tolkien

Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) - Mother Angelica

Vatican II Documents (1963-1965)

Documents from the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005)

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### Appendix 3 of 3 - Endnotes

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i. Leviticus 19:1 And the Lord said to Moses, 2 "Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, **You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.** (See also Lev 11:44, 45; Lev 20:7, 26)

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as **he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
and Sosthenes our brother, 2 to the church of God that is in

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Corinth, to **you who**

**have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy**, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and blameless before him.** 5 He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 **For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.**

James 1:4 And let perseverance be perfect, so **that you may be perfect and complete**, lacking in nothing.

Matthew 5:47 And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48

**You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Mt 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

ii. Genesis 1:1 **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 19 **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.** 20 **Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.** So they are without excuse; 21 for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

iii. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum), 11, Vatican Council II

iv. Catechism of the Catholic Church, #81, citing Dei Verbum, 9

v. Catechism of the Catholic Church, #81, citing Dei Verbum, 9

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vi. St John Chrysostom, Homily 4:3, 4 (See Breviary, Office of Readings for August 24, St Bartholomew)

vii. Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 **And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.** 19 **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**"

viii. John 21:24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25 **But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.**

ix. John 14:1 "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" 6 **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.** 7 **If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him.**"

x. Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;** and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27 **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** 28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

xi. Matthew 22:37 "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.** 38 **This is the great and first commandment.** 39 And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (See Luke 10:27; Mark 12:29-31)

xii. See Matthew 22:37-38, supra

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xiii. See Genesis 1:26-27, supra

xiv. Matthew 11: 28 "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for **I am meek and humble of heart**; and you will find rest for yourselves. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Colosians 2:1 For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of **Christ, 3 in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

(See Divine Praises: Blessed be **His most Sacred Heart**)

(See St Mary Faustina Kowalska: **Divine Mercy**)

John 4:23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 14:8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? **He who has seen me has seen the Father**; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 **Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me**; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

xv. 1 Corinthians 2:6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, **"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," 10 God has revealed to us through the Spirit.** (See Isaiah 64:4; 65:17) For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.

xvi. Catechism of the Catholic Church, #393 - **there is no repentance for men after death.**

xvii. 1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty

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hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. 7 Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. 8 **Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour.** 9 **Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world.** 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. 11 To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

xviii. Catechism of the Catholic Church #953

xix. 1 John 2 My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 **And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments.** 4 He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: 6 he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

xx. See Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37; Lk 18:27

xxi. Luke 22:42 "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

xxii. Mark 10:46 And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 **And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"** 49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; rise, he is calling you." 50 And throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Master, let me receive my sight." 52

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And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

xxiii. Mark 15:29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." (See Matthew 27:39-44)

xxiv. See for example: (Canaanite woman, Matthew 15:21-28); (Friend knocking at night, Luke 11:5-8); (Godless judge, Luke 18:1-8); (Seek and you shall find, Luke 11:9-13; Matthew 7:7-11; See also Mt 18:19; Mt 21:22; Mk 11:24; James 1:5-8; 1John 5:14-15; John 15:7;); (All that you Ask The Father in My Name, John 15:16; Jn 16:23-24); (The Lost Coin, Luke 15:8-10); (The Lost Sheep, Luke 15:3-7); (Finding of Jesus in The Temple, Luke 2:41-51); (Magdalene at the empty tomb, John 20:11-18); (Lowering the nets again after having caught nothing all night long, Luke 5:1-11) (Cana, John 2:1-11); (Repentant thief, Luke 23:39-43)

xxv. Catechism of the Catholic Church #2559-2565

xxvi. See Appendix 1 - Prayer Descriptions

xxvii. John 19:25-27, Here is your mother...

xxviii. Luke 1:36 And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible." 38 And Mary said, "**Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.**" And the angel departed from her.

xxix. St Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of Perfection*, Ch 26-3