

CARMEL CLARION

OCDS NEWSLETTER
Eastern Regional Office
St. Florian Monastery
1233 South 45th Street
West Milwaukee, WI 53214
(414) 383-3565

VOLUME VI, NO. 1

APRIL - JUNE 1990

ANNUAL UPDATE ON OUR MEMBERSHIP

At this time we are reminded of our charity for our deceased members, as contained in our **Rule of Life**, Section XII of our **Local Statutes** and **A Commentary on The Rule of Life** by Fr. Michael Griffin, OCD.

"First off all, the Community should have a Mass celebrated for the repose of any deceased member after his or her death. The Community should also recite the Office and say other suitable prayers on the occasion of a member's death, particularly at the wake.

Experience shows that the family deeply appreciates this act of love and consideration on the part of the members of the Order, and in this way they can see that the Secular Order is animated by deep love and concern for all its members. In addition to this, each member of the Community should privately offer any prayers that may be felt appropriate for showing love and appreciation for those members 'who have gone before us in the spirit of faith' and 'who sleep in Christ, that they may find in His presence light, happiness and peace.' " (Canon of the Mass).

OUR MEMBERS WHO HAVE DIED IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD 1989

Mary Ackermann	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Cincinnati OH	01-01
Katherine Bichy	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Baltimore MD	03-17
Isebel Bristol	The Infant Jesus of Prague	Travers City MI	01-24
Cecilia Clermont	Saint Joseph	West Palm Bh FL	10-06
Anne Coughlan	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	01-01
Gab. De la Pointe	The Precious Blood	Manchester NH	01-01
Lorraine Gaffney	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	03-10
Marcelle Gehle	Our Lady of Mercy	Schenectady NY	10-13
Marguerite Gordon	St. Teresa of Jesus	Milwaukee WI	05-18
Eleanor Haas	The Sacred Heart	Morristown NJ	01-01
Frances Hoy	Our Lady of Mount Carmel	Washington DC	01-01
Marie Land Irwin	Bl Virgin of Mt Carmel & St Joseph	Elysburg PA	04-05
Leona Keil	Our Lady of the Holy Rosary	Toledo OH	11-06
Susan Khare	St. Teresa of Jesus	Avenel NJ	01-06
Dorothy Laskey	Our Lady of the Holy Rosary	Toledo OH	07-19
Annie Leonard	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	03-05
Alice McDonnell	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Avenel NJ	02-10
Marian Mortimer	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Buffalo NY	01-07
Martha Nolan	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	01-01
Helen O'Brien	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	09-03
James O'Brien	The Infant Jesus of Prague	Travers City MI	12-24
Yvonne O'Brien	The Infant Jesus of Prague	Travers City MI	12-24
Anna Olson	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Roxbury MA	09-13
Wm "Jerry" Payne	St. Joseph, Protector	Mt. Clemens MI	09-13
Ruth Plaag	Mary Immaculate & Mary Magdalen	Flemington NJ	04-26
Vivian Smith	Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St. Teresa	Bettendorf IA	01-01
Esther Stevens	The Infant Jesus of Prague	Travers City MI	11-05

1990 BUDGET FOR JANUARY - JUNE.**INCOME**

Balance on hand January 1, 1990	\$3,281.00	
Clarion subscriptions, separate from dues	800.00	
Annual dues from the members	10,000.00	
Sale of printed Rule, forms, etc.	1,000.00	
Donations from the 85 Groups	5,000.00	
Total projected income for 1990		\$20,081.00

EXPENSES FOR JANUARY - JUNE 1990

Stipend for two Delegate Prov. @ \$4,900		\$ 9,800.00	
Office Equipment and Supplies @ 65.00 mo.		390.00	
Printing of Rule, Certificates, Forms, etc.		1,900.00	
Postage for letters and returned Clarions @ 110 mo.		650.00	
Telephone @ 75.00		450.00	
Clarion Printing of three issues @ 400.00	1,200.00		
Clarion Bulk mailing of two issues @ .10	600.00		
Clarion Desktop Publisher: Ventura	500.00		
Total Clarion expenses		2,300.00	
OCDS Library Books, Magazines and Tapes		50.00	
Congress, Seminars and Meetings (in August)		00.00	
Automobile payments @ 471.57	2,828.42		
Automobile insurance & registration	195.58		
Automobile travel (gas, oil, tolls, food)	1,500.00		
Total Automobile travel expenses		4,524.00	
Total Expenses for the year 1990			\$20,064.00

Observations. We budgeted that we needed \$36,000.00 to cover the 1989 expenses and actually spent \$35,911.61. So, we were within our budget on the expenses. However, some items will not be actually paid for until the time deposit comes due in March, so we went over budget a little bit.

As for the income, we had calculated from the present OCDS records that we had about 3,000 dues-paying members and that if each one paid \$15.00 in annual dues we would ideally receive \$45,000.00. This would allow us to pay some of the expenses from June-December of 1987. But, our records are not completely accurate on the 3,000 members, and we were not sure at all what percentage of the members would pay their dues. So we asked in the March 1989 Clarion, "What percentage will each Council collect?" The actual amount that came in was \$15,902.26, a far cry from the ideal. Each parish has the same problem; only a certain percentage pay their dues. So we are faced with some homework before we can draft the new budget for the year 1990.

First of all there will be elections in June and we are not sure how many delegate provincials will be appointed for the Secular Order. So, we cannot budget expenses. So we decided to draft a budget for the first six months:

January-June 1990. Then, after elections, in the summer issue we can give the July-December budget.

Reflecting on the 1989 Balance Sheet, perhaps about 65% of the members actually paid their dues, instead of 56%; our records may carry too many names from the past. We need to send a computer printout of what we have to each Group and then trim down the list and make an urgent appeal to the other 35% to pay their dues. But, this will be very difficult financially speaking not knowing how many additional will pay. We may be bankrupt by April, or August, or if we are really 'lucky' not until October.

Perhaps we should also ask the 85 Groups to 'adopt' the Eastern Regional Office as their 'charity for the year' and not send their 'missionary contribution' overseas until the Regional Office is more financially stable. The annual dues are \$15.00 per year.

We are also seeking advice from the membership on what the Eastern Regional Office could do to meet its financial obligations for the coming year. For now, we are presenting a balanced budget for the first six months of the new year.

(Continue on Page 10)

LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON SOME ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Released Dec. 14, 1989, feast of St. John of the Cross

I. Introduction

1. Many Christians today have a keen desire to learn how to experience a deeper and authentic prayer life despite the not inconsiderable difficulties which modern culture places in the way of the need for silence, recollection and meditation. The interest which in recent years has been awakened also among some Christians by forms of meditation associated with some Eastern religions and their particular methods of prayer is a significant sign of this need for spiritual recollection and a deep contact with the divine mystery.

Nevertheless, faced with this phenomenon many feel the need for sure criteria of a doctrinal and pastoral character which might allow them to instruct other in prayer, in its numerous manifestations, while remaining faithful to the truth revealed in Jesus, by means of the genuine tradition of the church. This present letter seeks to reply to this urgent need, so that in the various particular churches the many different forms of prayer, including new ones, may never lose their correct personal and communitarian nature.



Prayer Group



These indications are addressed in the first place to the bishops, to be considered in that spirit of pastoral solicitude for the churches entrusted to them, so that the entire people of God — priests, religious and laity — may again be called to pray, with renewed vigor, to the Father through the Spirit of Christ the Lord.

2. The ever more frequent contact with other religions and with their different styles and methods of prayer has, in recent decades, led many of the faithful to ask themselves what value non-Christian forms of meditation might have for Christians. Above all, the question concerns Eastern methods.*1

Some people today turn to these methods for therapeutic reasons. The spiritual restlessness arising from a life subjected to the driving pace of a technologically advanced society also brings a certain number of Christians to seek in these methods of prayer a path to interior peace and psychic balance. This psychological aspect is not dealt with in the present letter, which instead emphasizes the theological and spiritual implications of the question.

Other Christians, caught up in the movement toward openness and exchange between various religions and

cultures, are of the opinion that their prayer had much to gain from these methods. Observing that in recent times many traditional methods of meditation, especially Christian ones, have fallen into disuse, they wonder whether it might not now be possible, by a new training in prayer, to enrich our heritage by incorporating what has until now been foreign to it.

Pray

3. To answer this question, one must first of all consider, even if only in a general way, in what the intimate nature of Christian prayer consists. Then one can see of and how it might be enriched by meditation methods which have been developed in other religions and cultures. However, in order to achieve this, one needs to start with a certain clear premise. Christian prayer is always determined by the structure of the Christian faith, in which the very truth of God and creature shines forth.

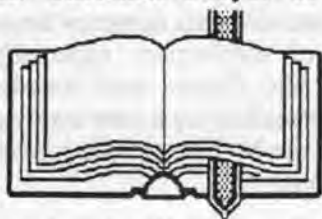
“Christian prayer is . . . a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between man and God.”

For this reason, it is defined, properly speaking, as a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between man and God. It expresses, therefore, the communion of redeemed creatures with the intimate life of the persons of the Trinity. This communion, based on Baptism and the Eucharist, source and summit of the life of the church, implies an attitude of conversion, a flight from “self” to the “you” of God.

Thus Christian prayer is at the same time always authentically personal and communitarian. It flees from impersonal techniques or from concentrating on oneself, which can create a kind of rut, imprisoning the person praying in a spiritual privatism which is incapable of a free openness to the transcendental God. Within the church, in the legitimate search for new methods of meditation it must always be borne in mind that the essential element of authentic Christian prayer is the meeting of two freedoms, the infinite freedom of God with the finite freedom of man.

*1. The expression “Eastern methods” is used to refer to methods which are inspired by Hinduism and Buddhism, such as Zen, transcendental meditation or yoga. Thus it indicates methods of meditation of the non-Christian Far East which today are not infrequently adopted by some Christians also in their meditation. The orientation of the principles and methods contained in this present document is intended to serve as a reference point not just for this problem, but also, in a more general way, for the different forms of prayer practiced nowadays in ecclesial organizations, particularly in associations, movements and groups.

II. Christian Prayer in the Light of Revelation.



4. The Bible itself teaches how the man who welcomes biblical revelation should pray. In the Old Testament this is a marvelous collection of prayers which have

continued to live through the centuries, even within the church of Jesus Christ, where they have become the basis of its official prayer: The Book of Praises or of Psalms.*2

Prayers similar to the psalms may also be found in earlier Old Testament texts or re-echoed in later ones.*3 The prayers of the Book of Psalms tell in the first place of God's great works on behalf of the chosen people. Israel meditates, contemplates and makes the marvels of God present again, recalling them in prayer.

In biblical revelation Israel came to acknowledge and praise God present in all creation and in the destiny of every man. Thus he is invoked, for example, as rescuer in time of danger, in sickness, in persecution, in tribulation. Finally, and always in the light of his salvific works, he is exalted in his divine power and goodness, in his justice and mercy, in his royal grandeur.

5. Thanks to the words, deeds, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament the faith acknowledges in him the definitive self-revelation of God; the incarnate Word who reveals the most intimate depth of his love. It is the Holy Spirit, he who was sent into

the hearts of the faithful, he who "searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:10), who makes it possible to enter into these divine depths. According to the promise Jesus made to the disciples, the Spirit will explain all that he had not yet been able to tell them. However, this Spirit "will not speak on his own authority," but "he will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16:13f). What Jesus calls "his" is, as he explains immediately, also God the Father's, because "all that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16:15).

"The Christian, even when he is alone and prays in secret, is conscious that he always prays for the good of the church in union with Christ . . ."

The authors of the New Testament, with full cognizance, always spoke of the revelation of God in Christ within the context of a vision illuminated by the Holy Spirit. The synoptic Gospels narrate Jesus' deeds and words on the basis of a deeper understanding, acquired after Easter, of what the disciples had seen and heard. The entire

Gospel of St. John is taken up with the contemplation of him who from the beginning is the Word of God made flesh.

Paul, to whom Jesus appeared in his divine majesty on the road to Damascus, instructs the faithful so that they "may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth (of

the mystery of Christ), and to know that love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:18ff). For Paul the mystery of God is Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3) and, the apostle clarifies, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with beguiling speech" (v. 4).



6. There exists then a strict relationship between revelation and prayer. The dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum teaches that by means of his revelation the invisible God "from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends (cf. Ex. 33:11; Jn. 15:14-15), and moves among them (cf. Bar. 3:38), in order to invite and receive them into his own company."*4 This revelation takes place through words and actions which have a constant mutual reference, one to the other; from the very beginning everything proceeds to converge on Christ, the fullness of revelation and of grace, and on the gift of the Holy Spirit. These make man capable of welcoming and contemplating the words and works of God and of thanking him and adoring him, both in the assembly of the faithful and in the intimacy of his own heart illuminated by grace.



**Bible Study Group
Pray From Scripture
Thursday Evenings
7:00 - 8:00 P.M.**

This is why the church recommends the reading of the Word of God as a source of Christian prayer, and at the same time exhorts all to discover the deep meaning of sacred Scripture through prayer "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.' "*5

*2. Regarding the Book of Psalms in the prayer of the church, cf. Institutio generalis de Liturgia Horarum, nn. 100-109.

*3. Cf. for example, Ex. 15, Dt. 32, 1 Sm. 2, 2 Sm. 22, and some prophetic texts, 1 Chr. 16.

*4. Dei Verbum, 2. This document offers other substantial indications for a theological and spiritual understanding of Christian prayer; see also, for example, 3, 5, 8, 21.

*5. Ibid., 25.



7. Some consequences derive immediately from what has been called to mind. If the prayer of a Christian has to be inserted in the Trinitarian movement of God, then its essential content must also necessarily be determined by the twofold direction of such movement. It is in

the Holy Spirit that the Son comes into the world to reconcile it to the Father through his works and sufferings.

On the other hand, in this same movement and in the very same Spirit, the Son incarnate returns to the Father, fulfilling his will through his passion and resurrection. The "Our Father," Jesus' own prayer, clearly indicates the unity of this movement: The will of the Father must be done on earth as it is in heaven (the petition for bread, forgiveness and protection make explicit the fundamental dimensions of God's will for us), so that there may be a new earth in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The prayer of Jesus ^{*6} has been entrusted to the church ("Pray then like this," Lk. 11:2). This is why when a Christian prays, even if he is alone, his prayer is in fact always within the framework of the "communion of saints" in which and with which he prays, whether in a public and liturgical way or in a private manner. Consequently, it must always be offered within the authentic spirit of the church at prayer, and therefore under its guidance, which can sometimes take a concrete form in terms of a proven spiritual direction. The Christian, even when he is alone and prays in secret, is conscious that he always prays for the good of the church in union with Christ, in the Holy Spirit and together with all the saints.^{*7}

III. Erroneous Ways of Praying

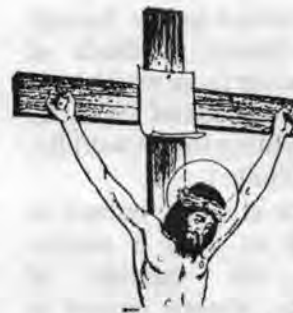
8. Even in the first centuries of the church some incorrect forms of prayer crept in. Some New Testament texts (cf. 1 Jn. 4:3; 1 Tim, 1:3-7 and 4:3-4) already give hints of their existence. Subsequently, two fundamental deviations came to be identified: Pseudognosticism and Messalianism, both of concern to the fathers of the church. There is much to be learned from that experience of primitive Christianity and the reaction of the fathers which can help in tackling the current problem.

In combating the errors of Pseudognosticism^{*8} the fathers affirmed that matter is created by God and as such is not evil. Moreover, they maintained that grace, which always has the Holy Spirit as its source, is not a good proper

to the soul, but must be sought from God as a gift. Consequently, the illumination or superior knowledge of the Spirit (gnosis), does not make Christian faith something superfluous. Finally, for the fathers, the authentic sign of a superior knowledge, the fruit of prayer, is always Christian love.



9. If the perfection of Christian prayer cannot be evaluated using the sublimity of gnostic knowledge as a basis, neither can it be judged by referring to the experience of the divine, as Messalianism proposed.^{*9} These false fourth-century charismatics identified the grace of the Holy Spirit with the psychological experience of his presence in the soul. In opposing them, the fathers insisted on the fact that the soul's union with God in prayer is realized in a mysterious way, and in particular through the sacraments of the church.



Moreover, it can even be achieved through experience of affliction or desolation. Contrary to the view of the Messalians, these are not necessarily a sign that the Spirit has abandoned a soul. Rather, as masters of spirituality have always clearly acknowledged, they may be an authentic participation in the state of abandonment experienced on the cross by our Lord, who always remains the model and mediator of prayer.^{*10}

10. Both of these forms of error continue to be a temptation for man the sinner. They incite him to try and overcome the distance separating creature from Creator, as though there ought not to be such a distance; to consider the way of Christ on earth, by which he wishes to lead us to the Father, as some thing now surpassed; to bring down to the level of natural psychology what has been regarded as pure grace, considering it instead as "superior knowledge" or as "experience."

^{*6}. Regarding the Prayer of Jesus, see *Institutio Genera lis de Liturgia Horarum*, nn. 3-4.

^{*7}. Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 9.

^{*8}. Pseudognosticism considered matter as something impure and degraded which enveloped the soul in an ignorance from which prayer had to free it, thereby raising it to true superior knowledge and so to a pure state. Of course not everyone was capable of this, only those who were truly spiritual; for simple believers, faith and the observance of the commandments of Christ were sufficient.

^{*9}. The Messalians were already denounced by St. Ephraim Syrus (*Hymni contra Haereses* 22, 4, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 169, 1957, p. 79) and later, among others, by Epiphanius of Salamina (*Panarion*, also called *Adversus Haereses*: PG 41, 156-1200; PG 42, 9-832) and Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (*Contra haereticos*: G. Ficker, *Amphilochiana* 1, Leipzig 1906, 21-77).

^{*10}. Cf., for example, St. John of the Cross, *Subida del Monte Carmelo* II, chap. 7, 11.

Such erroneous forms, having reappeared in history from time to time on the fringes of the church's prayer, seem once more to impress many Christians, appealing to them as a kind of remedy, be it psychological or spiritual, or as a quick way of finding God.*11

11. However, these forms of error, wherever they arise, can be diagnosed very simply. The meditation of the Christian in prayer seeks to grasp the depths of the divine in the salvific works of God in Christ, the incarnate Word, and in the gift of his Spirit.



These divine depths are always revealed to him through the human-earthly dimension. Similar methods of meditation, on the other hand, including those which have their starting point in the words and deeds of Jesus, try as far as possible to put aside everything that is worldly, sense perceptible or conceptually limited.

It is thus an attempt to ascent to or immerse oneself in the sphere of the divine, which as such is neither terrestrial, sense perceptible nor capable of conceptualization.*12 This tendency, already present in the religious sentiments of the later Greek period (especially in "Neoplatonism"), is found deep in the religious inspiration of many peoples, no sooner than they become aware of the precarious character of their representation of the divine and of their attempts to draw close to it.

"There is no doubt that in prayer one should concentrate entirely on God and as far as possible exclude the things of this world which bind us to our selfishness."

12. With the present diffusion of Eastern methods of meditation in the Christian world and in ecclesial communities, we find ourselves faced with a pointed renewal of an attempt, which is not free from dangers and errors, to fuse Christian meditation with that which is non-Christian. Proposals in this direction are numerous and radical to a greater or lesser extent. Some use Eastern methods solely as a psychophysical preparation for a truly Christian contemplation; others go further and, using different techniques, try to generate spiritual experiences similar to those described in the writings of certain Catholic mystics.*13 Still others do not hesitate to place that absolute without image or concepts, which is proper to Buddhist theory,*14 on the same level as the majesty of God revealed in Christ, which towers above finite reality.

To this end, they make use of a "negative theology" which transcends every affirmation seeking to express what God is and denies that the things of this world can offer traces of the infinity of God. Thus they propose abandoning not only meditation on the salvific works accomplished in history by the God of the Old and New Covenant, but also the very idea of the one and triune God, who is love, in favor of an immersion "in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity."*15 These and similar proposals to harmonize Christian meditation with Eastern techniques need to have their contents and methods ever subjected to a thoroughgoing examination so as to avoid the danger of falling into syncretism. (Con't on p.11)

*11. In the Middle Ages there existed extreme trends on the fringe of the church. These were described, not without irony, by one of the great Christian contemplatives, the Flemish Jan van Ruysbroek. He distinguished three types of deviations in the mystical life (*Die gheestelike Brulocht* 228, 12-230, 17; 230, 18-32, 22; 232, 23-236, 6) and made a general critique of these forms (236, 7-237, 29). Similar techniques were subsequently identified and dismissed by St. Teresa of Avila who perceptively observed that "the very care taken not to think about anything will arouse the mind to think a great deal," and that the separation of the mystery of Christ from Christian meditation is always a form of "betrayal" (See: St. Teresa of Jesus, *Vida* 12, 5 and 22, 1-5).



*12. Pope John Paul II has pointed out to the whole church the example and the doctrine of St. Teresa of Avila who in her life had to reject the temptation of certain methods which proposed a leaving aside of the humanity of Christ in favor of a vague self-immersion in the abyss of the divinity. In a homily given Nov. 1, 1982, he said that the call of Teresa of

Jesus advocating a prayer completely centered on Christ "is valid, even in our day, against some methods of prayer which are not inspired by the Gospel and which in practice tend to set Christ aside in preference for a mental void which makes no sense in Christianity. Any method of prayer is valid insofar as it is inspired by Christ and leads to Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (cf. Jn. 14:6)." See: *Homilia Abulae habita in honorem Sanctae Teresiae*: AAS 75 (1983), 256-257.

*13. See, for example, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a spiritual work by an anonymous English writer of the 14th century.

*14. In Buddhist religious texts, the concept of "nirvana" is understood as a state of quiet consisting in the extinction of every tangible reality insofar as it is transient, and as such delusive and sorrowful.

*15. Meister Eckhart speaks of an immersion "in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity," which is a "darkness in which the light of the Trinity never shines." Cf. *Sermo Ave Gratia* Pena in *Fine* (J. Quint, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, Hanser 1955, 261).



(Continue on Page 11)

EXPLANATION OF THE SYMBOLS:

- * Exact day of month not known.
- # Exact day and month not known.
- % Optional Memorial Feast.
- Ⓔ Memorial Feastday.
- \$ Solemn Feastday.

APRIL 1990

**DISCALCED
CARMELITE
SECULAR
ORDER
CALENDAR**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>1 5th Sunday of Lent <i>On daylight-saving time</i></p> <p>"I suffer because I do not know whether I shall be saved."</p> <p>The Little Arab</p>	<p>2 <i>St. Francis of Paolo</i></p> <p>"I have liked beautiful things...but now God is asking the opposite of me."</p> <p>St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Bl. Teresa of the Andes was beatified in 1987.</p> <p>"May Jesus always lead me by the way of the cross."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa of the Andes</p>	<p>4 <i>St. Isidore</i></p> <p>"I am but a little dust and this dust is calling to you; listen to it, Lord."</p> <p>The Little Arab</p>	<p>5 <i>St. Vincent Ferrer</i></p> <p>"In the school of Carmel the mystical contemplative life is the fruit of the Eucharistic life."</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>6 First Friday</p> <p></p> <p>"The Lord helps us... he is a true friend."</p> <p>St. Teresa of Jesus</p>	<p>7 <i>St. John Baptist de la Salle</i> First Saturday</p> <p>Bl. Teresa of the Andes makes her profession of vows, for she is in danger of death.</p>
<p>8 Passion (Palm) Sunday World Youth Day</p> <p>"Christ continues to live and suffer in his members."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>9 Monday of Holy Week</p> <p>"Again St. John of the Cross sets Our Lady before us as the Mother of Sorrows, taking part in the sufferings of Our Lord."</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>10 Tuesday of Holy Week Passover</p> <p>"...she who desires peace must see, suffer and be silent."</p> <p>St. Teresa Margaret</p>	<p>11 Wednesday of Holy Week</p> <p>"One can only learn the science of the cross if one truly suffers under the weight of the cross."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>12 Holy Thursday</p> <p>Bl. Teresa of the Andes dies from typhus in 1920 after 11 months in Carmel.</p>	<p>13 Good Friday <i>Fast and Abstinence</i></p> <p></p> <p>"Today I stood with you (Mary) beneath the cross..."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>14 Holy Saturday Easter Vigil</p> <p>"It is from Christ himself that you must learn how to love him."</p> <p>Bl. John Soreth</p>
<p>15 Easter Sunday Income Tax Day</p> <p>"He has shown me great mercy, and I acknowledge my unworthiness."</p> <p>St. Teresa Margaret</p>	<p>16 Easter Monday</p> <p>"It always seemed that the Lord was keeping something for me in Carmel which I could find only there."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>17 Easter Tuesday</p> <p>"From its (Carmel's) summit the contemplative soul looks down on the mystery of Nazareth."</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>18 Easter Wednesday</p> <p>"O souls, created for love and by love, why do you not love Love?"</p> <p>St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi</p>	<p>19 Easter Thursday</p> <p>"In our better moments, we do recognize our imperfections...that there is room for improvement"</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>20 Easter Friday</p> <p>"I should like to follow him closely always, but I am stumbling everywhere."</p> <p>The Little Arab</p>	<p>21 Easter Saturday</p> <p>"This is the Virgin who has never ceased to console me and to listen to me."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa of the Andes</p>
<p>22 2nd Sunday of Easter</p> <p>"Mother, I am a Catholic." (Then both wept together.)</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>23 <i>St. George</i></p> <p>"The mysticism of Teresa (of Jesus), no matter how sublime in the description of the sweet encounter with God...is real and practical." Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>24 <i>St. Fidells of Sigmaringen</i></p> <p>"She (Therese) was deeply convinced...that with-out mortification a spiritual life is an impossibility."</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>25 <i>St. Mark</i></p> <p>"Bl. John Soreth compares the practice of the Rule...with the precious pearl of the Gospel..."</p> <p>Bl. Titus Brandsma</p>	<p>26</p> <p>"For the Christian these is no stranger. Whoever is near us and needing us must be 'our neighbor'."</p> <p>Bl. Teresa Benedict</p>	<p>27</p> <p>"How truly wonderful are you, O Word of God, in the Holy Spirit..."</p> <p>St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi</p>	<p>28 <i>St. Peter Chanel</i></p> <p>"Be careful not to indulge in a great deal of talk..."</p> <p>St. Albert of Jerusalem</p>
<p>29 3rd Sunday of Easter</p> <p>"May nothing trouble my peace or make me leave you."</p> <p>Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity</p>	<p>30 <i>St. Pius V</i></p> <p>"Let us be students of the laws of God (Gospel and Rule) so that we may conduct ourselves according to them."</p> <p>Bl. Raphael Kalinowski</p>					

EXPLANATION OF THE SYMBOLS:

- * Exact day of month not known.
- # Exact day and month not known.
- % Optional Memorial feast.
- Ⓔ Memorial Feastday.
- \$ Solemn Feastday.

MAY 1990

**DISCALCED
CARMELITE
SECULAR
ORDER
CALENDAR**

SUNDAY		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 St. Joseph the Worker "The Lord looks at the love with which we do our works..." St. Teresa of Jesus	2 St. Athanasius "Grace in the child is like a hidden little flame which must be painstakingly tended and nursed." Bl. Teresa Benedict	3 SS. Philip & James St. Therese is made Co-Patron of France with St. Joan of Arc in 1944.	4 First Friday "Bless, O Lord, the heavy loneliness of troubled souls." Bl. Teresa Benedict	5 First Saturday Cinco de Mayo "The devotion to Mary is one of the most delightful flowers in Carmel's garden." Bl. Titus Brandsma
6 4th Sunday of Easter World Day of Prayer for Vocations "Carmel is the natural retreat of the contemplative." Bl. Titus Brandsma	7 "Carmel is a corner of heaven; in silence and solitude we live there alone with God who is Alone. Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity	8 "The more intense one's faith, the closer is their union with God." St. John of the Cross	9 "A fully developed faith is one of the profoundest acts of the human personality." Bl. Teresa Benedict	10 "Even in sickness the prayer is genuine when it comes from a soul that loves." St. Teresa of Jesus	11 Bless, O Lord, the sinking feeling of those who suffer." Bl. Teresa Benedict	12 SS. Nereus & Achilleus St. Pancras "I should like to have lips the purest to pronounce the name of Mary, and a pen of gold to write it." The Little Arab	
13 5th Sunday of Easter Mother's Day "It is more serious to lack the virginity of charity than the virginity of purity." The Little Arab	14 St. Matthias "How happy I am that God has created me to call him my GOD." The Little Arab	15 St. Isidore the Farmer "My beloved is the mountains, and lonely wooded valleys..." St. John of the Cross	16 St. Simon Stock, O. Carm. Ⓔ "When brethren are united in praising God there the Lord will bestow his blessing." St. Simon Stock	17 "Very characteristic of Carmelite spirituality is its conception of the spiritual life as a growing thing." Bl. Titus Brandsma	18 St. John I "I am not afraid of my weakness, for within me is the Strong One." Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity	19 "Who would have ever thought you would ever be Mother of God?" The Little Arab	
20 6th Sunday of Easter "When I go to Communion I feel strong. Jesus gives me life, not only of soul, but also of body." Bl. Teresa of the Andes	21 Victoria Day (Canada) "It seems to the soul that the entire universe is a sea of love in which it is engulfed." St. John of the Cross	22 "Feelings and emotions can be a cause of great pain...for the flesh and blood ever struggle against the spirit." St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart	23 "When...I was baptized, I thought it but one more preparation for my entering the Order of Carmelite Nuns." Bl. Teresa Benedict	24 Ascension Holy Day of Obligation "There is so little time to enjoy your presence and you hide from me!" St. Teresa of Jesus	25 Venerable Bede St. Gregory VII St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Ⓔ "To suffer and not to die." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi (1566-1607)	26 St. Philip Neri "She (Mary) is the ideal type of woman who knew how to unite tenderness with power. She stood beneath the cross." Bl. Teresa Benedict	
27 7th Sunday of Easter "So the Carmelites must be contemplatives who from their active life always return to the contemplative..." Bl. Titus Brandsma	28 Memorial Day "Bless, O Lord, the restlessness of human beings in mortal pain." Bl. Teresa Benedict	29 "Nature praises him; the sky, the stars, the trees, the grass, everything praises him" The Little Arab	30 Shavuoth "A Being whose name is Love is dwelling within us...and asks us to live in his company." Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity	31 Visitation "We recognize her as the highest perfection which human nature by the grace of God has attained." Bl. Titus Brandsma			

EXPLANATION OF THE SYMBOLS:

- * Exact day of month not known.
- # Exact day and month not known.
- % Optional Memorial feast.
- ⊕ Memorial Feast.
- \$ Solemn Feastday.

JUNE 1990

**DISCALCED
CARMELITE
SECULAR
ORDER
CALENDAR**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 St. Justin First Friday "The essence of. . . Carmelite life is to intercede for sinners and cooperate in the redemption of the world..." Bl. Teresa Benedict	2 <i>SS. Marcellinus & Peter</i> First Saturday "Our Lady will herself take me by the hand and lead me to heaven" Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity
3 Pentecost Sunday "O Consuming Fire! Spirit of Love! Descend within me and repro- duce in me, as it were, an incarnation of the Word..." Bl. Elizabeth	4 9th Week in Ordinary Time "Lord, get everyone to burn like the candles of the sanctuary." The Little Arab	5 St. Boniface "Surely those who dwell in Carmel would have caught from the flame (of Elijah) a spark of the love and zeal which burned in the great prophet." Bl. Titus Brandsma	6 St. Norbert "I love the Carmel- ites because they are so simple, so joyful, and Jesus must be that way." The Little Arab	7 Bl. Anne of ⊕ St. Bartholomew "What infinite love burned in that sacred heart of yours, Lord Jesus." Bl. Anne	8 "Nothing is obtained from God except by love." St. John of the Cross	9 St. Ephrem "The mystery of the Incarnation has revealed how valuable man is to God, how intimately God wants to be united to man." Bl. Titus Brandsma
10 Trinity Sunday "O my God, Trinity whom I adore! Help me to become utterly forgetful of self..." Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity	11 St. Barnabas "In the mystical Body of Christ...the prayers and sacrifices of the contemplatives represent an organ of high value." Bl. Titus Brandsma	12 10th Week in Ordinary Time "Every time you praise your neighbor apart from his relation to Jesus you fall very low" The Little Arab	13 St. Anthony of Padua "How can nothingness even the balance between itself and plenitude?" St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart	14 Flag Day "There is no way to catch in words the sublime things of God" St. John of the Cross	15 "It is my dream before I die to be transformed into Jesus Crucified." Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity	16 "I thank you, O my God, for all the grace you have given me... especially suffering." Little Therese
17 The Body and Blood of Christ Father's Day "...the Holy Sacrament ...has always been a constant and important part of our tradition." Bl. Titus Brandsma	18 11th Week in Ordinary Time "And when the Lord comes to me in Com- munion...What do you want of me Lord?" Bl. Teresa Benedict	19 St. Romuald "For a year I prepared myself to receive (my First) Holy Communion." Bl. Teresa of the Andes	20 "My Love, all the water in the world would not suffice to slake my heart's thirst." The Little Arab	21 St. Aloysius Gonzaga "How gently and lovingly you wake in my heart, where in secret you dwell alone." St. John of the Cross	22 Sacred Heart "We can do this much...copy as nearly as possible the humi- lity and gentleness of his Sacred Heart." St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart	23 <i>Immaculate Heart of Mary</i> "In every way become the handmaids of the Lord, after the examp- le of the Mother of God." Bl. Teresa Benedict
24 Birth of St. John the Baptist Probably the birthday of St. John of the Cross in Fontveros in 1542.	25 12th Week in Ordinary Time "In the name of Jesus I implore you to show charity towards the weak." The Little Arab	26 "Prayer appears utterly futile because of my state of mind and my indifference." St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart	27 St. Cyril of Alexandria "There is a soft nocturnal glow in a mind that is freed... calmed and meditative." Bl. Teresa Benedict	28 St. Irenaeus "In the evening of life I shall appear before you with empty hands." Little Therese	29 <i>SS. Peter & Paul</i> "The mysticism of the school of Carmel could not claim to be true...if it were not apostolic in its own peculiar way." Bl. Titus Brandsma	30 <i>1st Martyrs of the Church of Rome</i> St. Teresa makes a Foundation of Nuns in Soria in 1581.

BALANCE SHEET FOR 1989**I N C O M E**

Balance on hand January 1, 1989	\$14,792.64	
Clarion subscription, separate from dues	1,321.00	
Stipends for the official visit of the Delegate Prov.	1,686.00	
Annual dues from the membership	15,902.26	
Donations to the Eastern Regional Office	399.00	
Interest and dividend on savings	330.16	
Sale of automobile	1550.21	
Total Income to work with for the year 1989		35,981.27

E X P E N S E S

Stipend for 2 Delegate Prov.	\$17,412.00	
Office Supplies, furniture & equip.	418.79	
Postage for letters, returned Clarions	1,192.35	
Printing of promotional flyer on OCDS	241.50	
Stationery	522.25	
Clarion printing of three issues	1,062.29	
Clarion postage, (4 issues) bulk rate @ .084	1,065.80	
Total Clarion expenses for the year 1989		2,128.09
Telephone	750.00	
OCDS Library books and tapes	75.00	
OCDS Congress and Lay Apostolate Meetings	2,635.00	
Automobile payments	2,357.85	
Automobile insurance, license & maintenance	600.45	
Travel expenses (gas, maintenance, tolls, etc.)	3,011.00	
Total travel expenses for the year		5,969.30
Transfer to a time deposit	4,567.33	
Total Expenses for year 1989,		35,911.61
Balance in Checking Account on December 31, 1989	69.66	
Balance in time deposit	5,000.00	
Payables from 1989 when time deposit comes due	1,788.00	

BALANCE ON HAND DECEMBER 31, 1989**\$3,281.00**

The "Rule of Life & The Local Statutes" have been printed up and are now available for the membership @ \$.50 plus postage. These copies are very useful for study and meditation. They are also very good for promotion; to give to new members who are seeking to know the essence of the Secular Order. They weigh a little over an ounce, about 13 copies to the pound.

THE RULE OF LIFE

**THE SECULAR ORDER OF
DISCALCED CARMELITES**
1233 South 45th Street Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53214

SEMINAR ON ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Sponsored by the Secular Order of Carmel Community of Saint Joseph at Toronto, Ontario
On May 25-27, 1990, at St. Joseph's Centre
3377 Bayview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2M 3S4
Official Opening by Fr. Dominic Borg, O.C.D.
From the new foundation of Carmelites in Ontario
Conducted by two Friars from the Washington Prov.
Frs. Regis Jordan, O.C.D. & Albert Tittiger, O.C.D.
Registration fee: \$60.00 (Canadian), non-refundable
Accommodation: \$65.00 (weekend room and board)
Accommodation by the day: \$15.00 (lunch included)
Bookings made on a first come first serve basis.
Mrs. Margaret Bots, Treas., 3717 St. Clair Avenue, E.,
Scarborough, Ont. M1M 1T5 (416) 233-4770, 6-7pm.

IV. The Christian Way to Union With God

13. To find the right "way" of prayer, the Christian should consider what has been said earlier regarding the prominent features of the way of Christ, whose "food is to do the will of him who sent (him), and to accomplish his work" (Jn. 4:34). Jesus lives no more intimate or closer a union with the Father than this, which for him is continually translated into deep prayer. By the will of the Father he is sent to mankind, to sinners, to his very executioners and he could not be more intimately united to the Father then by obeying his will.



This did not in any way prevent him, however, from also retiring to a solitary place during his earthly sojourn to unite himself to the Father and receive from him new strength for his mission in this world. On Mount Tabor, where his union with the Father was manifest, there was called to mind his passion (cf. Lk. 9:31), and there was

not even a consideration of the possibility of remaining in "three booths" on the Mount of the Transfiguration. Contemplative Christian prayer always leads to love of neighbor, to action and to the acceptance of trials, and precisely because of this it draws one more closely to God.

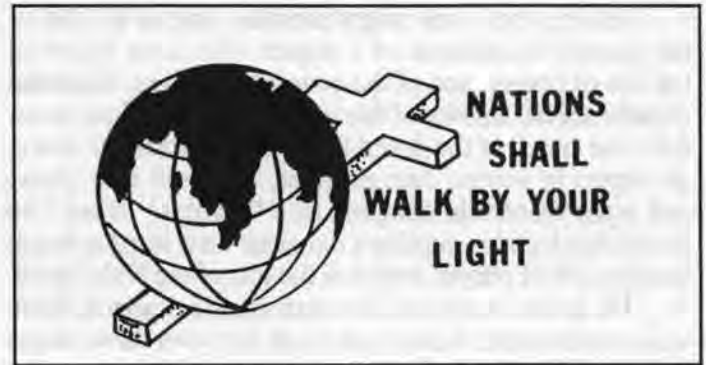
14. In order to draw near to that mystery of union with God, which the Greek Fathers called the divinization of man, and to grasp accurately the manner in which this is realized, it is necessary in the first place to bear in mind that man is essentially a creature,^{*16} and remains such for eternity, so that an absorbing of the human self into the divine self is never possible, not even in the highest states of grace.

However, one must recognize that the human person is created in the "image and likeness" of God, and that the archetype of this image is the Son of God, in whom and through whom we have been created (cf. Col. 1:16). This archetype reveals the greatest and most beautiful Christian mystery: From eternity the Son is "other" with respect to the Father and yet, in the Holy Spirit, he is "of the same substance." Consequently this otherness, far from being an ill, is rather the greatest of goods. There is otherness in God himself, who is one single nature in three persons, and there is also otherness between God and creatures, who are by nature different.

Finally, in the holy Eucharist, as in the rest of the sacraments — and analogically in his works and in his words — Christ gives himself to us and makes us participate in his divine nature,^{*17} without, nevertheless, suppressing our created nature in which he himself shares through his incarnation.



15. A consideration of these truths together brings the wonderful discovery that all the aspirations which the prayer of other religions expresses are fulfilled in the reality of Christianity beyond all measure, without the personal self or the nature of a creature being dissolved or disappearing into the sea of the Absolute. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8).



This profoundly Christian affirmation can reconcile perfect union with the otherness existing between lover and loved, with eternal exchange and eternal dialogue. God is himself this eternal exchange, and we can truly become sharers of Christ, as "adoptive sons" who cry out with the Son in the Holy Spirit, "Abba, Father." In this sense, the fathers are perfectly correct in speaking of the divinization of man, who having been incorporated into Christ, the Son of God by nature, may by his grace share in the divine nature and become a "son in the Son." Receiving the Holy Spirit, the Christian glorifies the Father and really share in the Trinitarian life of God.

V. Questions of Method

16. The majority of the great religions which have sought union with God in prayer have also pointed out ways to achieve it. Just as "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions,"^{*18} neither should these ways be rejected out of hand simply because they are not Christian. On the contrary, one can take from them what is useful so long as the Christian conception of prayer, its logic and requirements are never obscured.

*16. Cf. Gaudium at Spes, 19,1: "The dignity of man rises above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. The invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his Creator."

*17. As St. Thomas writes of the Eucharist: "Proprius effectus huius sacrament est conversio hominis in Christum, ut dicat cum Apostolo: Vivo ego, iam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus (Gal. 2:20)." (In IV Sent., d. 12, q. 2, a. 1).

*18. Nostra Aetate, 2.

It is within the context of all of this that these bits and pieces should be taken up and expressed anew.

One of the “. . . ways to achieve. . . union with God in prayer. . . the humble acceptance of a master who is an expert in the life of prayer, and of the counsels he gives.”

Among these one might mention first of all that of the humble acceptance of a master who is an expert in the life of prayer, and of the counsels he gives. Christian experience has known of this practice from earliest times, from the epoch of the desert fathers. Such a master, being an expert in *sentire cum ecclesia*, must not only direct and warn of certain dangers; as a “spiritual father,” he has to also lead his pupil in a dynamic way, heart to heart, into the life of prayer, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

17. In the later non-Christian classical period, there was a convenient distinction made between three stages in the life of perfection: the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive way. This teaching has served as a model for many schools of Christian spirituality. While in itself valid, this analysis nevertheless requires several clarifications so as to be interpreted in a correct Christian manner which avoids dangerous misunderstandings.

Be reconciled to God

18. The seeking of God through prayer has to be preceded and accompanied by an ascetical struggle and a purification from one’s own sins and errors, since Jesus has said that only “the pure of heart shall see God” (Mt. 5:8). The Gospel aims above all at a moral purification from the lack of truth and love and, on a deeper level, from all the selfish instincts which impede man from recognizing and accepting the will of God in its purity. The passions are not negative in themselves (as the Stoics and Neoplatonists thought), but their tendency is to selfishness. It is from this that the Christian has to free himself in order to arrive at that state of positive freedom which in classical Christian times was called *apatheia*, in the Middle Ages *impassibilitas* and in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises *indiferencia*.^{*19}

“That habitual union with God...which in the New Testament is called ‘continuous prayer’ is not necessarily interrupted when one devotes oneself also. . . to work and to the care of one’s neighbor.”

This is impossible without a radical self-denial, as can also be seen in St. Paul who openly uses the word mortification (of sinful tendencies).^{*20} Only this

self-denial renders man free to carry out the will of God and to share in the freedom of the Holy Spirit.

19. Therefore, one has to interpret correctly the teaching of those masters who recommend “emptying” the spirit of all sensible representations and of every concept, while remaining lovingly attentive to God. In this way, the person praying creates an empty space which can then be filled by the richness of God. However, the emptiness which God requires is that of the renunciation of personal selfishness, not necessarily that of the renunciation of those created things which he has given us and among which he has placed us.



There is no doubt that in prayer one should concentrate entirely on God and as far as possible exclude the things of this world which bind us to our selfishness. On this topic St. Augustine is an excellent teacher: If you want to find God, he says, abandon the exterior world and re-enter into your self. However, he continues, do not remain in your self, but to beyond yourself because you are not God: He is deeper and greater than you. “I look for his substance in my soul and I do not find it; I have however meditated on the search for God and, reaching out to him, through created things, I have sought to know ‘the invisible perfections of God’ ” (Rom. 1:20).^{*21} “To remain in oneself”: This is the real danger. The great doctor of the church recommends concentration on oneself, but also transcending the self which is not God, but only a creature. God is “deeper than my inmost being and higher than my greatest height.”^{*22} In fact God is in us and with us, but he transcends us in his mystery.^{*23}

*19. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Ejercicios espirituales*, 23 at passim.

*20. Cf. Col. 3:5; Rom, 6:11ff; God. 5:24.

*21. St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* XLI, 8: PL 36, 469.

*22. St. Augustine, *Confessions* 3, 6, 11: PL 32, 688. Cf. *De Vera Religione* 39, 72: PL 34, 154.

*23. The positive Christian sense of the “emptying” of creatures stands out in an exemplary way in St. Francis of Assisi. Precisely because he renounced creatures for love of God, he saw all things as being filled with his presence and resplendent in their dignity as God’s creatures and the secret hymn of their being is intoned by him in his *Cantico delle Creature*. Cf. C. Esser, *Opuscula sancti Patris Francis ci Assisiensis*, Ed. Ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata (Roma) 1978, pp. 83-86. In the same way he writes in the *Lettera a tutti i fedeli*: “Let every creature in heaven and on earth and in the sea and in the depth of the abyss (Rev. 5:13), give praise, glory and honor



20. From the dogmatic point of view, it is impossible to arrive at a perfect love of God if one ignores his giving of himself to us through his incarnate Son, who was crucified and rose from the dead. In him, under the action

of the Holy Spirit, we participate, through pure grace, in the interior life of God. When Jesus says, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), he does not mean just the sight and exterior knowledge of his human figure "the flesh is of no avail," (Jn. 6:63).

What he means is rather a vision made possible by the grace of faith: to see, through the manifestation of Jesus perceivable by the senses, just what he, as the Word of the Father, truly wants to reveal to us of God. "It is the Spirit that gives life. . . the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life," (ibid). This "seeing" is not a matter of a purely human abstraction (ab-stractio) from the figure in which God has revealed himself; it is rather the grasping of the divine reality in the human figure of Jesus, his eternal divine dimension in its temporal form.

As St. Ignatius says in the Spiritual Exercises, we should try to capture "the infinite perfume and the infinite sweetness of the divinity" (N. 124), going forward from that finite revealed truth from which we have begun. While he raises us up, God is free to "empty" us of all that holds us back in this world, to draw us completely into the Trinitarian life of his eternal love. However, this gift can only be granted "in Christ through the Holy Spirit," and not through our own efforts, withdrawing ourselves from his revelation.



21. On the path of the Christian life, illumination follows from purification, though the love which the Father bestows on us in the Son and the anointing which we receive from him in the Holy Spirit (cf 1 Jn. 2:20). Ever since the early Christian

period, writers have referred to the "illumination" received in Baptism. After their initiation into the divine mysteries, this illumination brings the faithful to know Christ by means of the faith which works through love.



Some ecclesiastical writers even speak explicitly of the illumination received in Baptism as the basis of that sublime knowledge of Christ Jesus (cf Phil. 3:8), which is defined as *theoria* or contemplation.^{*24} The faithful, with the grace of Baptism, are called to progress in the knowledge and witness of the mysteries of the faith by "the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience."^{*25}

No light from God can render the truths of the faith redundant. Any subsequent graces of illumination which God may grant rather help to make clearer the depth of the mysteries confessed and celebrated by the church, as we wait for the day when the Christian can contemplate God as he is in glory (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2).

"Without doubt, a Christian needs certain periods of retreat into solitude to be recollected and, in God's presence, to rediscover his path."

22. Finally, the Christian who prays can, if God so wishes, come to a particular experience of union. The sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist,^{*26} are the objective beginning of the union of the Christian with God. Upon this foundation, the person who prays can be called, by a special grace of the Spirit, to that specific type of union with God which in Christian terms is called mystical.



23. Without doubt, a Christian needs certain periods of retreat into solitude to be recollected and, in God's presence, to rediscover his path. Nevertheless, given his character as a creature, and as a creature who knows that only in grace is he secure, his method of getting closer to God is not based on any technique in the strict sense of the word. That would contradict the spirit of childhood called for by the Gospel. Genuine Christian mysticism has nothing to do with technique; It is always a gift of God; and the one who benefits from it knows himself to be unworthy.^{*27}

and blessing to God, for he is our life and our strength. He who alone is good (Lk. 18:19), who alone is the most high, who alone is omnipotent and admirable, glorious and holy, worthy of praise and blessed for infinite ages of ages. Amen." (Opuscula, 124).

St. Bonaventure shows how in every creature Francis perceived the call of God and poured out his soul in the great hymn of thanksgiving and praise (cf. *Legenda S. Francisci*, Chapt. 9, n. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Quaracchi 1989, Vol. VIII, p. 530).

*24. See, for example, St. Justin, *Apologia* 1, 61, 12-13: PG 6, 420-421; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1, 6, 25-31: PG 8, 281-284; St. Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae diversae*, 13, 1: PG 31, 424-425; St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 40, 3, 1: PG 36, 361.

*25. *Dei Verbum*, 8.

*26. The Eucharist, which the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* defines as "the source and summit of the Christian life" (11), makes us "really share in the body of the Lord"; in it "we are taken up into communion with him" (7).

*27. Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Castillo Interior* IV, 1, 2.



24. There are certain mystical graces conferred on the founders of ecclesial institutes to benefit their foundation, and on other saints too, which characterize their personal experience of prayer and which cannot, as such, be the object of imitation and aspiration for other mem-

bers of the faithful, even those who belong to the same institutes and those who seek an even more perfect way of prayer.^{*28} There can be different levels and different ways of sharing in a founder's experience of prayer, without every thing having to be exactly the same. Besides, the prayer experience that is given a privileged position in all genuinely ecclesial institutes, ancient and modern, is always in the last analysis something personal. And it is to the individual person that God gives his graces for prayer.



25. With regard to mysticism, one has to distinguish between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the charisms granted by God in a totally gratuitous way. The former are something which every Christian can quicken in himself by his zeal for the life of faith, hope and charity; and thus, by means of a serious ascetical struggle, he can reach a certain experience of God and of the

contents of the faith. As for charisms, St. Paul says that these are, above all, for the benefit of the church, of the other members of the mystical body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:17).

"It is certain that a charism which bears fruit for the church, cannot, in the context of the New Testament, be exercised without a certain degree of personal perfection..."

With this in mind, it should be remembered that charisms are not the same things as extraordinary "mystical" gifts (cf. Rom. 12:3-21), and that the distinction between the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" and "charisms" can be flexible. It is certain that a charism which bears fruit for the church, cannot, in the context of the New Testament, be exercised without a certain degree of personal perfection and that, on the other hand, every "loving" Christian has a specific task (and in this sense a "charism") "for the building-up of the body of Christ" (cf. Eph. 4:15-16),^{*29} in communion with the hierarchy whose job it is "not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good"(Lumen Gentium, 12).

VI. Psychological-Corporal Methods

26. Human experience shows that the position and demeanor of the body also have their influence on the recollection and dispositions of the spirit. This is a fact to which some Eastern and Western Christian spiritual writers have directed their attention.



Their reflections, while presenting points in common with Eastern non-Christian methods of meditation, avoid the exaggerations and partiality of the latter, which, however, are often recommended to people today who are not sufficiently prepared.

The spiritual authors have adopted those elements which make recollection in prayer easier, at the same time recognizing their relative value: They are useful if reformulated in accordance with the aim of Christian prayer.^{*30}



For example, the Christian fast signifies, above all, an exercise of penitence and sacrifice, but already for the fathers it also had the aim of rendering man more open to the encounter with God and making a Christian more capable of self-dominion and at the same time more attentive to those in need.

*28. No one who prays, unless he receives a special grace, covets an overall vision of the revelations of God, such as St. Gregory recognized in St. Benedict, or that mystical impulse with which St. Francis of Assisi would contemplate God in all his creatures, or an equally global vision, such as that given to St. Ignatius at the River Cardoner and of which he said that for him it could have taken the place of sacred Scripture. The "dark night" described by St. John of the Cross is a part of his personal charism of prayer. Not every member of his order needs to experience it in the same way so as to reach that perfection of prayer to which God has called him.

*29. The Christian's call to "mystical experiences can include both what St. Thomas classified as a living experience of God via the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the inimitable forms (and for that reason forms to which one ought not to aspire) of the granting of grace. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Ia IIae, 1c, as well as a. 5, ad 1.

*30. See, for example, the early writers, who speak of the postures taken up by Christians while at prayer: Tertullian, De oratione XIV: PL 1, 1170, XVII: PL 1, 1174-1176; Origen, De oratione, XXXI, 2: PG 11, 550-553, and of the meaning of such gestures: Barnabas, Epistula XII, 2-4: PG 2, 760-761; St. Justin, Dialogus 90, 4-5: PG 6, 689-692; St. Hippolytus of Rome, Commentarium in Dan. III, 24: GCS I, 168, 8-17; Origen, Homiliae in Ex. XI, 4: PG 12, 377-378. For the position of the body see also, Origen, De Oratione XXXI, 3: PG 11, 553-555.

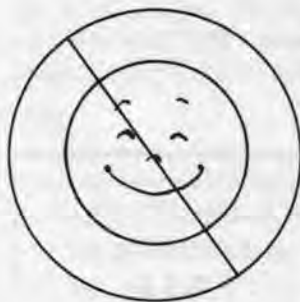
In prayer it is the whole man who must enter into relation with God, and so his body should also take up the position most suited to recollection.*31



Such a position can in a symbolic way express the prayer itself, depending on cultures and personal sensibilities. In some aspects, Christians are today becoming more conscious of how one's bodily posture can aid prayer.

27. Eastern Christian meditation*32 has valued psychophysical symbolism, often absent in Western forms of prayer. It can range from a specific bodily posture to the basic life functions, such as breathing or the beating of the heart. The exercise of the "Jesus Prayer," for example, which adapts itself to the natural rhythm of breathing can, at least for a certain time, be of real help to many people.*33

On the other hand, the Eastern masters themselves have also noted that not everyone is equally suited to make use of this symbolism since not everybody is able to pass from the material sign to the spiritual reality that is being sought. Understood in an inadequate and incorrect way, the symbolism can even become an idol and thus an obstacle to the raising up of the spirit to God. To live out in one's prayer the full awareness of one's body as a symbol is even more difficult: it can degenerate into a cult of the body and can lead surreptitiously to considering all bodily sensations as spiritual experiences.



28. Some physical exercises automatically produce a feeling of quiet and relaxation, pleasing sensations, perhaps even phenomena of light and of warmth, which resemble spiritual well-being. To take such feelings for the authentic consolations of the Holy Spirit would be a totally erroneous way of conceiving the spiritual life. Giving them a symbolic significance typical of the mystical experience, when the moral condition of the person concerned does not correspond to such an experience, would represent a kind of mental schizophrenia which could also lead to psychic disturbance and, at times, to moral deviations.

That does not mean that genuine practices of meditation which come from the Christian East and from the great non-Christian religions, which prove attractive to the man of today who is divided and disoriented, cannot constitute a suitable means of helping the person who prays to come before God with an interior peace, even in the midst of external pressures.

It should, however, be remembered that habitual union with God, namely that attitude of interior vigilance and appeal to the divine assistance which in the New

Testament is called "continuous prayer,"*34 is not necessarily interrupted when one devotes oneself also, according to the will of God, to work and to the care of one's neighbor. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do all to the glory of God," the apostle tells us (1 Cor. 10:31). In fact, genuine prayer as the great spiritual masters teach, stirs up in the person who prays an ardent charity which moves him to collaborate in the mission of the church and to serve his brothers and sisters for the greater glory of God.*35

VII "I Am the Way"

29. From the rich variety of Christian prayer as proposed by the church, each member of the faithful should seek and find his own way, his own form of prayer. But all of these personal ways, in the end, flow into the way to the Father, which is how Jesus Christ has described himself. In the search for his own way, each person will, therefore, let himself be led not so much by his personal tastes as by the Holy Spirit, who guides him through Christ to the Father.



30. For the person who makes a serious effort there will, however, be moments in which he seems to be wandering in a desert and, in spite of all his efforts, he "feels" nothing of God. He should know that these trials are not spared anyone who takes prayer seriously. However, he should not immediately see this experience, common to all Christians who pray, as the "dark night" in the mystical sense. In any case, in these moments his prayer, which he will resolutely strive to keep to, could give him the impression of a

*31. Cf. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Ejercicios espirituales*, n. 76.

*32. Such as, for example, that of the Hesychast anchorites. Hesychia or external and internal quiet is regarded by the anchorites as a condition of prayer. In its oriental format is characterized by solitude and techniques of recollection.

*33. The practice of the "Jesus Prayer," which consists of repeating a formula, rich in biblical references, of invocation and supplication (e.g. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me"), is adapted to the natural rhythm of breathing. In this regard, see St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Ejercicios espirituales*, n. 258.

*34. Cf. I Thes. 5:17, also 2 Thes. 3:8-12. From these and other texts there arises the question of how to reconcile the duty to pray continually with that of working. See, among others, St. Augustine, *Epistula* 130, 20: PL 33, 501-502 and St. John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum* III, 1-3: SC 109, 92-92. Also, the "Demonstration of Prayer," by Aphraates, the first father of the Syriac church, and in particular Nos. 14- 15, which deal with the so-called "works of prayer" (cf. the edition of J. Parisot, *Afraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes*, IV: PS 1, pp. 170-174).

*35. Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Castillo Interior*, VII, 4, 6.

certain "artificiality," although really it is something totally different: in fact it is at that very moment an expression of his wishes to remain even when he receives no subjective consolation in return.

In these apparently negative moments, it becomes clear what the person who is praying really seeks: Is he indeed looking for God who, in his infinite freedom, always surpasses him; or is he only seeking himself, without managing to go beyond his own "experiences," whether they be positive "experiences" of union with God or negative "experiences" of mystical "emptiness."



31. The love of God, the sole object of Christian contemplation, is a reality which cannot be "mastered" by any method or technique. On the contrary, we must always have our sights fixed on Jesus Christ, in whom God's love went to the cross for us and there he assumed even the condition of estrangement from the Father (cf. Mk. 13:34). We therefore should allow God to decide the way he wishes to have us participate in his love.

But we can never, in any way, seek to place ourselves on the same level as the object of our contemplation, the free love of God; not even when, through the mercy of God the Father and the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts, we receive in Christ the gracious gift of a sensible reflection of that divine love and we feel drawn by the truth and beauty and goodness of the Lord.



The more a creature is permitted to draw near to God, the greater his reverence before the thrice-holy God. One then understands those words of St. Augustine: "You can call me friend; I recognize myself a servant."³⁶ Or the words which are even more familiar to us, spoken by her who was rewarded with the highest degree of intimacy with God: "He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness" (Lk. 1:48).

The supreme pontiff, John Paul II, in an audience granted to the undersigned cardinal prefect, gave his approval to this letter, drawn up in a plenary session of this congregation, and ordered its publication.

At Rome, from the offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 15, 1989, the feast of St. Teresa of Jesus.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect
Archbishop Alberto Bovone, Secretary

*36. St. Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos CXLII, 6: PL 37, 1849. Also see: St. Augustine, Tract. in Ioh. IV, 9: PL 35, 1410: "Quando autem nec ad hoc dignum se dicit, vere plenus Spiritu Sancto erat, qui sic servus Dominum agnovit, et ex servo aminus fieri meruit."

P. S. The papal document above has been edited by dividing some of the long paragraphs, by adding the Christian symbols, by high-lighting certain texts by putting them in bold print between ruler lines and by putting the footnotes at the bottom of each page instead of all at the end of the document.

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