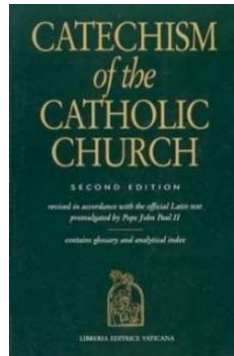




Conversations of Faith

Reflections on the Catechism



Part Four: Prayer in the Christian Life Chapter One – The Universal Call to Prayer (CCC 2566-2597)

Article I: In the Old Testament

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1.) God created man and woman in His image with the same desire for Him that He has for us. Our relationships with God the Father are naturally one of encounter, sharing each other's lives. God calls all people to prayer, to seek Him out and encounter Him as He seeks to encounter us. As the Catechism states, *"the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer."* (CCC #2567).

2.) The Old Testament or Salvation History records this drama as it plays out from creation to the coming of Christ. In this covenant drama, it is God who always acts first. After the fall, it is God who calls to Adam and Eve, *"Where are you?. . What is this that you have one?"* (CCC #2568, Gen 3:9). In the ongoing drama of our own lives, know that it is God who seeks us out first. Like the Good Shepherd who notices sheep are missing, He turns back to find them.

3.) We can see this in the covenant with Noah when God promises to renew, redeem and gather all creation back to Himself. Early on in the Old Testament, the Lord God begins revealing Himself, once again, to man.

4.) Prayer is a covenant relationship, entering into communion with God. The great patriarch Abraham is a type and example of the faith of Saint Joseph. At the heart of Abraham's prayer and faith, is the openness to know and the willingness to do God's will. *"Abraham's heart is entirely submissive to the Word and so he obeys. Such attentiveness of the heart, whose decisions are made according to God's will, is essential to prayer."* (CCC #2570). Another characteristic of prayer is our fidelity will be tested. Our wills were broken when we fell into sin. God the Father now tests our wills to strengthen us. We can see this covenant drama we call prayer play out from Adam and Eve Abraham. Step by step, God teaches fallen humanity to seek out the God who calls him first. The covenants with Noah and Abraham are key stages in the covenant drama that will culminate with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

5.) God sends Moses as a messenger to announce the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. Prayer is also a dialogue between man and God. Moses is a lot like us in that he argues, groans, and complains to God. Moses is reluctant but also faithful and humble. When he led the people into the desert, Moses spoke with God often and at length *"face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."* (CCC #2576). Prayer forms an intimate relationship with God. Moses and the Lord God had become accustomed to each other. Moses' the Law Giver, kept himself in the presence of God to guide and strengthen his mission. Moses also serves as a type of Christ. Notice that he never prays for himself but begs the Father to intercede for others.

6.) Delivered from bondage, the Chosen People of God are gathered together as a "holy nation." After the Ark, the Temple will be the centerpiece of communal worship. *"The prayer of the People of God flourishes in the shadow of God's dwelling place, first the ark of the covenant and later the Temple."* (CCC #2578). God calls us individually and communally to enter into the drama of prayer. King David is a type of Christ, a shepherd that prays for the people in their name. Jews and Christians have made the Davidic Psalms an integral part of prayer life and worship.

7.) The prophets show us how the covenant drama unfolds and deepens. The prophets were powerful intercessors who were attentive to the Word of God and sought a face-to-face encounter with the God of Abraham and Jacob. They were men and women of great zeal to announce the ways of God and salvation to come. For Christians, John the Baptist should come to mind.

8.) Prayer in the Old Testament takes many forms. It is communal and personal, from the heart and liturgical. The unfolding drama of prayer in the Old Covenant teaches us its relation between man and God. God seeks us first by giving us the grace to find Him and the light to see Him. The prayers of the patriarchs, prophets, and Psalms are the heart responding to the inspiration to seek and respond to God. This search and desire for light, and seeing God face to face, will find its fulfillment, perfection, and completion in Jesus Christ. Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, comes to see and speak to us face to face.

9.) In the Eucharist and the sacraments, we have the blessing of encountering the God prophets searched for. Through prayer, sacraments, liturgy, and living our faith, we encounter God Himself.

10. Prayer is a battle of faith and trust, fight like Jacob and Abraham. Moses pleaded to God on behalf of the Chosen People, to intercede for one another like Moses. The prophets zealously sought the face of God and called people to the conversion of heart, seek the Lord and evangelize like a prophet. Lastly, pray like the Psalms. Pray in the Temple and from your heart, personally and in the assembly.

Next week's reflection will look at Jesus Christ, the perfect model of prayer (CCC # 2598-2622).