



PRAYER IN THE MANNER OF FATHER CAFFAREL 18/07/2024

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It is a great joy to be here with you this morning. Having had the grace to live alongside Father Caffarel for 18 years, it is always a joy to try to pass on a little of what I have received, particularly on the subject of interior prayer.

This meeting will have 3 parts:

- A conversation: What is mental or interior prayer?
- Practical advice for entering into interior prayer
- Followed by a time of silent prayer

It will be a huge challenge to experience all of this in 45 minutes. So I cannot strongly advise those who want to discover or deepen this way of praying to contact the schools of interior prayer of TOOL whose contact details are displayed on the screen.

Let's begin by taking a few moments:

Christ tells us: *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

The resurrected Christ is truly present here, loving and acting among us. Let us open ourselves to his presence by invoking the Holy Spirit:

Come Holy Spirit,

Ignite your clarity in my soul.

Fill our hearts with love.

And strengthen our weak bodies with your eternal vigor.





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Introduction

Father Caffarel, at the end of his life, vaguely feeling that we were heading towards troubled times, where marriage and the family were going to be particularly undermined, strongly invited people to pray.

"If prayer comes to desert our world, then the human person and our civilization will soon collapse... If so many couples are in crisis, wouldn't it be because they pretend to love each other without having to connect about the source of love? They forget that a true marital agreement is impossible apart from the agreement of each spouse with God."

"This is why", continue Father Caffarel, "I am convinced that there is no greater service to be rendered to married people than to invite them to pray and to help them to pray."

He explains why:

"Because this was crucial in my life, it gave me the joy of living, the grace of living, the impetus to live. Consequently, I cannot help but wish for others this encounter with the living Christ, this discovery that God is love." (1973)

This is what stimulates us to live interior prayer every day but...

What is mental or interior prayer?

First of all, it is not saying prayers, singing, speaking...

It's both very simple and a very big mystery! Above all, he tells us, it is a relationship of friendship, an encounter of love with someone, the resurrected Christ who wants to attach me to Him and lead me in Him and with Him to the Father in the impulse of Love that is the Holy Spirit.

But to meet him I still have to really know him.



I - Know Christ

Indeed, as we have all experienced it, we don't love someone we don't know. On the contrary, between two friends, two spouses, the more we know each other, the more the love grows.

This is the testimony of this grandfather celebrating his 60th wedding anniversary surrounded by his 28 children and grandchildren. Guillemette, 24 years old, asks him "Grandpa, after so many years of marriage, what new things can you still say about Grandma?" To which he answers spontaneously, looking at her with great tenderness, "the more I know her, the more I love her!"

The same is true with my relationship with Christ! The more I know him, the more I love him!

Let us ask for the grace for each other, as Father Caffarel says, "*to have for Christ the same passionate interest that lovers have for each other...*", to become true seekers of God to become true lovers of God!

But how?

In interior prayer, grab hold of my gospel and never let go.

Three tips from Father Caffarel:

1. When I open the gospel, I go **looking for someone!**

+ Someone alive! The Resurrected Christ

+ Who wants to talk to me personally today. This is what Saint Paul affirms in 1 Thessalonians 2,16

2. Read and reread the Gospel as **the bride reads and rereads the message of love from her fiancé.**

Beyond what is written, she tries to connect with the feelings, the thoughts, the very mystery of her fiancé.

Likewise, I will read and reread the Gospel with this same attention of the heart. By looking at the facts and gestures, the reactions of Christ, I will discover more and more the unfathomable riches of his love and confess like Saint John "*God is Love*", God is only Love!

When I see Jesus, for example, crying for his friend Lazarus who has just died, he is not pretending to cry! St John tells us: "He became perturbed and deeply troubled, Jesus wept" Jn 11:33-34. Faced with the suffering of his friends, the scandal of death, Jesus is touched to the most intimate part of himself! It is an extremely human, warm, compassionate love that he shows!

And it is with this same love that he loves me at the time of prayer. If I open myself to it, this love does not remain external or distant from me.

It is the very love of the Father and the Son which is as if distilled drop by drop to the most intimate of my heart by his powerful word... "*I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*" Jn 10.10

This is the great and mysterious exchange that takes place at the time of interior prayer:

It's a bit like two old spouses who, through knowing each other and loving each other deeply, even end up resembling each other. What a mystery!

"*If you knew the gift of God,*" Christ tells us as to the Samaritan woman! So you would run to come meet me and I will share my life with you with the Father...

3. Faced with such a mystery, we sense that intelligence and the heart are not enough, and this is the 3rd piece of advice, **we must ask the Holy Spirit**, the *Father of the poor*! And who among us does not feel poor at the time of prayer?

With these 3 pieces of advice, I will become little by little a humble, persevering, and passionate seeker of God. By reading and rereading the Gospel, I will become more and more aware that Christ loves me with this profoundly human and divine love.

And this leads me to the 2nd part of the conversation.

II - Christ loves me

Three aspects of his Love will deepen over time, thanks to the Gospel:

1) Christ loves me personally

And not broadly because I am part of this sample of humanity that He loves. No, Christ loves me Elizabeth, the unique being that I am. And each of us can use our first name here.



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Let us remember the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus shows us this shepherd who, leaving his whole flock, goes in search of his little sheep, the one he has lost. And he searches for her until he finds her.

And here's the climax: when he finds her, he doesn't kick her in the shanks. No, he leans towards her, lifts her with tenderness, places her on his shoulders and returns home with joy.

At the time of prayer, let us allow ourselves to be taken and placed on the shoulders of Christ who takes us home to Him, to the Father's house. And let us believe, as a French poet says, "*that the sheep keeps its shepherd warm.*"

2°) Christ loves me as I am.

You know well that to truly love someone is to love them as they are and not as we dream!

Let's listen to the poignant testimony of this couple.

"Married for 5 years, mother of 2 children, I was unfaithful to him. I loved him though. Not wanting to ruin his happiness, I made sure that he couldn't suspect anything.

During a vigil, he expressed to me, in terms that touched my heart, his tenderness, his esteem, his admiration. It was too much, and I blurted out: 'If you knew!' - 'I know,' he replied. These words made me explode: So why play this awful comedy on me? ... I was aggressive, mocking, hurtful.

He waited until the storm had subsided. Then calmly, tenderly, he added: 'Understand! For six months, I suffered cruelly. But my suffering was bearable because it did not damage me, while for you, your illness was damaging you, something intolerable to my love. I saw clearly what I had to do, the only thing I could do: love you even more than before so that you can be resurrected to love.' And in fact Serge's love, right away, made me this new being."

And Father Caffarel comments:

"Can I hope that recalling this distant memory will help you understand what God expects of you? ... Understand, instead of fleeing him, go to interior prayer, expose your sinful soul to his gaze. You will discover that for God, to forgive is to love, to love with a love such that a brand-new love arises in the darkness and impurity of the soul..."

Yes, the Lord loves me just as I am and is with me against my sin...!

3°) Christ is currently looking at me with love.

I appeal to your experience: an exchange of loving glances, often silent, where each person feels existed, recognized, loved as they are.

This is the experience of this man who declared to his fiancée: "*Under your gaze, I remember the unfreezing of my entire being.*"

How much more so under the gaze of Christ!



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"Jesus, looking at him, loved him" (Mark 10:21)

Faced with such a look, I will react and respond to this Love of Christ. And this is the 3rd part of the conversation.

III - React to the Love of Christ

There are many ways to do this. Here are 3 essential ones which involve Faith, Charity, and Hope.

1°) *By faith, I open myself and I offer myself to the Love of Christ*

A bit like an open book on which he can engrave his image and likeness...

In the interior prayer, "*I am a canvas, He is the artist.*" tells us Saint John of the Cross.

And Jesus said to Saint Catherine of Siena:

"Make yourself capable (Make yourself capable by faith) and I will make myself torrent."

To believe and open myself to this all-powerful and creative Love, which does not necessarily mean feeling this love.

2°) *Reaction of love*, that of St Paul on the road to Damascus: "*Lord, what do you want me to do?*"

This is what this married woman experiences in a very simple and concrete way.

"The love of God that fills me, I obviously want to give to others, above all to my loved ones, my husband, my family, my friends, the inhabitants of our village. The only way to do this apart from prayer is to try ... to be of service to them without them being embarrassed, to accept them as they are, to be cheerful and happy; in a word, to try to love them as Jesus loves me. It's not always easy."

3°) Finally last reaction, *that of Hope*.

"My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I enter and see the face of God?" (Ps 42:3)

When we love, we want to become one with the loved one.



It is the same with the Lord until the day of the face to face.

I **conclude this conversation** with this deep conviction of Father Caffarel: Lord, give me the grace to determine to live this heart to heart with you every day!

This is what we will try to experience now.

(These are outlines to help with simultaneous translation, but it will not be word for word.)

Practical advice for entering into prayer

We will start with some **tips** for entering into prayer.

Then, we will read a Gospel passage followed by a brief commentary and we will engage in around ten minutes of silence, interspersed with a few verses and we will end with an Our Father.

It's late in the morning, we are tired, the time is perhaps not very favorable...

So, let's take the time to relax for a few moments and to do this, stretch our legs and arms while avoiding boxing our neighbor ... let's raise our shoulders and let them fall, let's yawn if we need to...

If necessary, let us cough, clear our throat, blow our nose in order to have a great **quality of silence which will help us to have an in-depth encounter with the Lord**. There are many of us, if each of us clears our throat once, I have done the math, we will be disturbed every quarter of a second... It is an immense challenge that is thrown at us, but we will overcome it...

Let us begin by slowly tracing the sign of the cross, a gesture of faith and love of faith in the presence of the Trinity which has inhabited us since our baptism: *"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

God of immense majesty and infinite tenderness, we adore you.

Here we are, here I am before you, with all those I love, all those who have entrusted themselves to me, with the whole Church, the whole world.

Lord, *"Without you I can do nothing."*

"Come, Spirit of holiness,

Wash what is polluted, bathe what is dry, heal what is injured.



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Come Father of the Poor, come and set us ablaze."

Let's take the time to adopt an attitude that is both relaxed and stable.

To be seated correctly, your feet are in good contact with the ground.

The back and head straighten.

The shoulders relax (for this, I can raise them while inhaling and lower them while exhaling).

To avoid being distracted, I can close my eyes.

I breathe peacefully, calmly,

I welcome outside noises.

All I have to do is to be there, present to God present.

○ you who are at home in the depths of my heart,

I believe that you are there present and that you look at me with love,
deep in my heart.

○ you who are at home in the depths of my heart,

I would like to be there, all yours, I want what you want,
deep in my heart.

From the Gospel of Saint Mark (Mk 10,46)

"As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging.

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.'

And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'

Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage; get up, he is calling you.'

He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus said to him in reply, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

The blind man replied to him, 'Master, I want to see.'

Jesus told him, 'Go your way; your faith has saved you.'

Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way."

Let's look at the scene:

A blind beggar sitting by the side of the road. A crowd noise, he inquires.

He learns that it is Jesus who is passing by, a crazy hope in his heart and he begins to shout: *Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.* The prayer is a cry.

We rebuke him, nothing helps. On the contrary.

Then Jesus, deeply touched by his persistent cry, stops, and says: "*Call him. Take courage, get up, he is calling you.*"

And he, rejecting everything that hinders him, the blind one, leaps up and goes to Jesus!

And it's this exchange of looks:

Blind gaze of Bartimaeus, full of faith and crazy confidence towards Jesus from whom he hopes everything.

Look of Jesus full of love and tenderness towards Bartimaeus

So, Jesus asks him this question as he asked each of us this morning: "What do you want me to do for you?"

It's up to each of us to respond personally. "What do you want me to do for you?"

Then simultaneous interpretation for the repetition of the verses and the end of the prayer.

