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Pray without Ceasing and Act without Reproach

- “Do your resolve to pray without ceasing to almighty God for the holy people and to carry out the office of High Priest without reproach?”
 - The last of the resolutions that a bishop-elect makes at ordination is also the most demanding. It’s the one to which he replies not just “I do,” but “I do, with the help of God.”
 - There are two essential parts of it.
 - The first is to pray incessantly for the holy people
 - The second is to carry out the office of High Priest without reproach. At one level, this second commitment is impossible, because even if a man exercises his episcopacy in the most impeccable and charitable way, he will nevertheless be reproached, just as Jesus was and promised would happen to those whom he sent out. “They will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. ... You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives,” Jesus tells us in St. Luke’s Gospel. This second commitment is therefore, it seems to me, is more modest, more basic, and more radical. First, it is the radical commitment to become a holy bishop, to try to bring everything he does into harmony with God’s will, so that, even if the world and the worldly would reproach him, the Lord Jesus would be able to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Second, it is the modest commitment not to do anything intentionally inconsistent with that holiness, not to cut corners on morality, not to scandalize in any way. It would therefore be good to ask on a retreat whether there is anything for which we might be able legitimately to be reproached? Anything for which we could reproach ourselves for? Third, it is the basic commitment to do one’s job, to full the essential duties entrusted, to be vigilant, awake and alert so as not to let the menservants beat the maidservants, the weeds overgrow the vineyard, or the thieves break in and ransack the house. As to this commitment, I could share with you lots of thoughts from *Pastores Gregis* and *Apostolorum Successores*, from St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis de Sales, as well as some observations from the bishops I’ve come to know well and with whom I’ve collaborated. We could focus on the symbolism of the mitre and how it’s supposed to be a crown of glory and holiness given by Christ, as the principal consecrator says when he places it on the new bishop’s head, “Receive the mitre, and may the splendour of holiness shine forth in you, so that when the Chief Shepherd appears you may deserve to receive from Him an unfading crown of glory.” But for the most part it would be second-hand speaking about a reality I don’t know, attempting to make analogies from what I do know, the priesthood, without even really being sure that the priestly glove fits the episcopal hand. I know that that ignorance hasn’t stopped me up until now during this retreat (!), but retreat masters can humbly convert on spiritual exercises, too.
 - What I’d like to spend our time on in this meditation, rather, is what will make your keeping that commitment to exercise the episcopacy without reproach possible: namely, the first part of this resolution, praying without ceasing, with the help of God. This is something that as a fellow disciple and brother priest I may have something more substantial to contribute from my own experience seeking to pray at all times for those entrusted to me.
 - Before I delve into the subject, I’d like to share one experience I had. It was June 28, 2005. I had arrived, six years ordained, to my first pastorate. The Church was extraordinary, but the rectory was a dump. Three dogs had basically destroyed it. It was filthy, the carpets, the

windows, the doors, the refrigerator, the offices. I had various friends help me move and when they looked at the state of the place, they suggested I keep everything in boxes and clean the place — an enormous 30-room rectory — before I sullied my own stuff. Eventually it would require men ripping out all of the carpets and three Portuguese women working 143 hours to clean. There wasn't even an answering machine, making every call basically a possible anointing call. They asked me where to begin. There was a small chapel made for the Soeurs Servantes de Notre Dame Reine du Clergé, who decades before had lived in the rectory, but was just used at that point to store stuff. I suggested we start there so that at least I could by the end of the day bring Jesus — in the Diocese of Fall River, Bishop O'Malley had given priests the permission to have a chapel in their rectories, as I had put in, with the permission of the pastor, in my two previous assignments. After a few hours or moving and cleaning, the chapel was ready. As I was admiring the cleaned woodwork, the phone rang, a religious sister from California, telling me that a young priest who was a mutual friend had just been found dead, having shot himself in the head in Alabama. It was a "Calgon take me away" moment if ever there were one. But when I eventually brought the Lord into the chapel, knelt down on the cleaned kneeler, and began to pray, I prayed unlike at any point in my life up until then. I wasn't praying for myself, to be able to deal patiently with the transition. I wasn't even praying much for Fr. Michael. It felt like my prayer was hijacked, so to speak, and I was praying for my parishioners, the vast majority of whom I had never met. It was so striking that it brought to mind something that St. John Paul II had said in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* that I always had thought was a duck. Vittorio Messori had asked him how he prayed, and I was expecting that he would describe his habits of prayer, something that I might, I thought, learn from and model my own prayer on. But instead he replied, "You would have to ask the Holy Spirit!" After a long-winded answer that seemed like a non-sequitur, Messori reiterated the question, about what he actually does when he prays. And St. John Paul began to speak like Bo Jackson, or Roger Clemens, or any of the professional athletes who have been accustomed to refer to themselves in the royal third person singular. "For what does the Pope pray," he asked. And then he started to list that "The Pope prays for" and listed various concerns of prayer. I remember thinking from 1993 until that moment that it was a duck, and I couldn't figure out why he simply didn't say, "I pray the Rosary. I adore the Lord. I pray for the intentions given to me," etc. My first day as a pastor it finally made sense. I felt as if the Holy Spirit truly took over, without my own bidding. My prayer has been different ever since, both objectively as well as subjectively. What I pray for us has changed, because I don't enter with the same agenda I once did. The agenda is provided and is generally geared more toward what are God's big emphases rather than my concerns and worries. And subjectively I have changed, because I'm come to grasp, as St. Augustine taught, prayer is less about the *quid ores* than about the *qualis ores*, less about the "what you say when you pray" and more about the "who you are as you pray," and the who we are is meant to be a docile wind instrument through which the Holy Spirit can blow where and how we wills. I share this because I think it may help to show that the Holy Spirit similarly tries to take over how we pray our work, how we pray the Mass, how we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, how we pray the Rosary and other parts of our prayer, too, so that we can approximate, more and more, by his assistance, praying without ceasing for God's holy people.

- Prayer

- Let's turn more deeply to the subject of prayer, so that we might grow in the capacity to pray always as an intercession for God's people and come through prayer to live our respective vocations without reproach.
- In 2009, at the beginning of the Year of Priests, Pope Benedict said about prayer in the life of the patron saint of diocesan clergy, "Prayer is the first task, the true path of sanctification for priests. ... One who prays is not afraid; one who prays is never alone; one who prays is saved! St. John Vianney is undoubtedly," he emphasized, "a model of an existence made prayer."

- The Holy Father implied that each of us is called to do more than get our prayers in; we're called to become pray-ers, lives that praise, thank, and petition God and request, receive and share him and his gifts. An "existence made prayer" is God's goal for our life. This is the means by which we will be able to carry out St. Paul's imperative, "Pray always," (Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:17), by allowing God to transform our existence into a constant loving dialogue and offering to God.
 - This is, admittedly, not what many of us learned in Catholic schools or CCD or maybe even in seminary. The Lord is asking more of us than to recite our prayers or even to make a daily holy hour. He wants us to give him permission to help us literally become a prayer. This is why the example of St. John Vianney, a "model of an existence made prayer," is so important and timely. Pope Benedict said in a letter to priests that the Curé of Ars taught his parishioners about prayer "primarily by the witness of his life. It was from his example that they learned to pray." His great triumph in Ars was that, even though very few of the residents of Ars prayed at home or in Church when he arrived, by the time he died, many were excelling in the life of prayer thanks to his witness and instruction.
 - St. John Paul II, in his Pastoral Plan for the Third Christian Millennium, spoke powerfully about the importance of prayer for every Christian. These words ought to have special significance for us as priests and bishops.
 - NMI 32. This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer... . We well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Lk 11:1). Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: "Abide in me and I in you" (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity.
 - We'll return to the Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer in just a minute, but I want to mention the risks if we don't learn from the Lord how to pray, if we don't live a life distinguished above all by the art of prayer.
 - NMI 34. It would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but "Christians at risk". They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of 'substitutes,' accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions. It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning.
 - We could add three things from Pope Benedict.
 - The first is that many have lost the art of prayer.
 - God and the world: *Many people were able to pray as children, but at sometime or other they lost the ability. Do you have to learn to talk with God? The organ of sensitivity to God can atrophy to such an extent that the words of faith become quite meaningless.* And whoever no longer possesses a faculty of hearing can no longer speak, because deaf goes together with being mute. It's as if one had deliberately to learn one's own mother tongue. Slowly one learns to spell out God's letters, to speak this language and -- if still inadequately -- to understand God. Gradually, then, one will begin to be able to pray for one's self and to talk with God, at first in a very childlike way -- in a certain sense we always remain like that -- but then more and more in one's own words.
 - The second is about activism, which is a particular plague for the clergy in America.

- DCE 37. It is time to reaffirm the importance of prayer in the face of the activism and the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work. Clearly, the Christian who prays does not claim to be able to change God's plans or correct what he has foreseen. Rather, he seeks an encounter with the Father of Jesus Christ, asking God to be present with the consolation of the Spirit to him and his work.
- The third is secularism
 - We are now facing the crisis of secularism, which means living “si Deus non daretur,” as if God were not a given, as if God didn’t exist. So many people, even those who believe in God, live as practical atheists, in which God is not a meaningful part of their day-to-day existence.
 - In a catechesis on St. Angela of Foligno, Pope Benedict said, “Today we all risk living as though God did not exist; he seems so distant from daily life.”
- Let’s turn to learning the Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer. What does that mean? Just that we make prayers to the Father “through your Son Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever?”
 - I think the best answer to this question was given by Cardinal Ratzinger in his book *Feast of Faith*, which are four of the most important pages I think I’ve read. He describes what he calls the “formal structure” of Christian prayer, its “content” and how God responds, and I’d like to share them with you.
 - Formal Structure of Christian Prayer
 - The basic reason why man can speak with God arises from the fact that God himself is speech, word. His nature is to speak, to hear, to reply.... Only because there is already speech, “Logos,” in God can there be speech, “logos,” to God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in communication with God.”
 - In God, there is speech and the intercourse of partners in dialogue. Man could speak with God if he himself were drawn to share in this internal speech. And this is what the Incarnation of the Logos means; he who is speech, Word, Logos, in God and to God, participates in human speech. This has a reciprocal effect, involving man in God’s own internal speech. ... As a result of the Incarnation, human speech has become a component in divine speech; it has been taken up, unconfusedly and inseparably, into that speech which is God’s inner nature.
 - Through the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of God, we can share in the human nature of Jesus Christ; and in sharing in his dialogue with God, we can share in the dialogue who God *is*. This is prayer, which becomes a real exchange between God and man.
 - The locus of this identification with Christ, facilitated by the Spirit, which necessarily implies that those involved are also identified with one another in Christ, is what we call “Church.” We could in fact define “Church as the realm of man’s discovery of his identity through the identification with Christ that is its source.
 - The content of Christian prayer
 - Abba is the fundamental word in the mouth of the Son. It expresses his whole being. ... Prayer is an act of being; it is affirmation, albeit not affirmation of myself as I am and of the word as it is, but affirmation of the ground of being and hence a purifying of myself and of the world from this ground upward.
 - We can only say Abba together with Christ, consenting to his Yes. Apart from the Son, the Father remains ambivalent and strange; it is Jesus who turns the scales of the Old Testament and makes the message clear. Patrocentrism presupposes the Christological character of prayer. Christian prayer depends on our continually looking to Christ, talking with him, being silent with him, listening to him, doing and suffering with him.
 - We encounter Christ as a living Person only in the foretaste of his presence which is

called “Church.” Through identification with Christ I discover my own entirely personal identity. The Church as a whole presents the model of this kind of identity as his body, a one-flesh union through the unifying power of love, which doesn’t destroy the duality but welds it into profound oneness. Middle Ages taught that the aim of prayer was that through it man should become a personal embodiment of the Church. We learn to speak together with our mother and her words become our words.

- How can I learn to pray? In communion. Prayer is always praying *with* someone. No one can pray to God as an isolated individual and in his own strength. Isolation and the loss of a basic sense of fellowship in prayer constitute a major reason for the lack of prayer. I learn to pray by praying with others, with my mother, by following her words, which are gradually filled out with meaning for me as I speak, live and suffer in fellowship with her. Naturally I must be always asking what these words mean. Naturally, too, I must continually “cash” these words into the small change of daily life. And having done so, I must try to repossess them in exchange for my small coin, little by little, as I draw nearer the fullness of the mystery and become more capable of speaking of it. And that is precisely why it is impossible to start a conversation with Christ alone, cutting out the Church: a Christological form of prayer that excludes the Church also excludes the Spirit and the human being himself.
- How does God answer prayer?
 - The Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. God gives himself. We are to ask no less than this. Jesus wants to give his joy to the full (Jn 16:24). Prayer, because of the transformation of being that it involves, means growing more and more into identity with the spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God (becoming an *anima ecclesiastica*, a personal embodiment of the Church); borne along by the very breath of his love, we have a joy that cannot be taken from us.
 - In Jesus, God participates in time, operating in love, which purifies men to be identified and united with him. To pray is to put oneself on the side of God’s love causality acting in the world, the causality of freedom. As Christians, as those who pray, this is our very highest task.
- So the Trinitarian shape of Christian features of all of these elements. It’s entering into God as we pray, entering into the relations of the person, together with others, as God gives us himself to do so. Learning this art — not necessarily as we just have, but in practice, through cooperation with God — is the secret to a truly vital Christian life. And this type of shared life with God is what makes possible constant prayer.
- The obstacle of the amount of work we have.
 - In 1997 Cardinal Ratzinger had a very powerful article printed in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* on the Ministry and life of priests. It describes very well the situation of parish priests today, the spiritual dangers we’re facing, and the way we’re called to respond. After describing who he “often finds himself torn between a great number of very different tasks,” with “three or four parishes at his charge” “harried by administrative task” and feeling “empty and less and less able to find time for the recollection which could provide him with fresh energy and inspiration,” he can become discouraged, lose the sense of his vocation and even be tempted to flee from the responsibilities or from the vocation altogether. He suggests three ways to overcome this situation:
 - The first is to “develop a living awareness of his ontological union with Christ, which is then expressed in his activity: Everything I do, I do in communion with him. Precisely in doing it, I am with him. No matter how multiple, or even contradictory my activities may seem to others, they still constitute a single vocation: it is all being together with Christ, acting as an instrument in communion with him.”

- The second flows from it: “Priestly asceticism should not be placed alongside pastoral action as if it were an additional burden, just one more assignment added to an already overwhelming day. It is precisely in action that I learn to overcome myself, to lose and give my life. In disappointments and failure I learn renunciation, acceptance of suffering and detachment from self. With the joy of success I learn gratitude. In the celebration of the sacraments, I inwardly benefit. In fact, there is no external work I perform in which I do not speak with Christ, and with the triune God through Christ. Thus I pray with others and for others. This *askesis* of service, or my ministry itself as the true asceticism of my life, is without any doubt a very important idea, but it requires constant, conscious exercise, an interior ordering of priestly action that comes from being a priest.
- The third is: “Even if I strive to approach service as asceticism and see sacramental action as a personal encounter with Christ, there have to be some moments when I can take time out, and “catch my breath” from activity, to ensure this interior orientation.” He cites St. Charles Borromeo’s words we have in the Breviary every November 4, in which St. Charles reminds us constantly to “meditate” on what we’re doing, to whom we’re speaking, whose blood has washed our people clean, etc., before saying, “The verb ‘meditate,’ repeated four times, shows the importance, for this great pastor of souls, of the deepening of our inner life as a basis for action. And we know very well how much Charles Borromeo gave himself to his people. He died at 46, worn out by his dedication to his ministry. This man who was truly consumed for Christ, and through him, for his fellow men, teaches us that such dedication is impossible without the regimen—and refuge—of an authentic, faithful interiority. This is a lesson we must learn, over and over again.”
- Cardinal Ratzinger finishes: “Ministry without spirituality, without interior life, leads to empty activism. ... To have time for God, to face him personally and intimately, is a pastoral priority of equal or even greater importance than all the other priorities. It is not an added duty, but the soul’s very breath, without which we would be “out of breath”—the spiritual breath, or “breathing” (*spiritus*) of the Holy Spirit within us. Although there are other important and appropriate ways to recuperate spiritually, the fundamental way to recover from activity and to learn to love it again, is the interior search for the face of God, which always restores our joy in God. One of the greatest, and most humble, parish priests of our century, Fr. Didimo Mantiero (1912-1992) from Bassano del Grappa [Italy], wrote in his spiritual diary: “Converts have always been made through the prayer and sacrifice of unknown faithful. Christ won souls, not by the force of his marvelous words, but by the power of his constant prayer. He preached by day, but at night he prayed.” Souls, that is, living men and women, cannot be drawn to God simply by convincing arguments or discussions. They have to be won through prayer—by God, and for God. Christian interior life is also the most important pastoral activity. In our pastoral plans this point ought to be given much greater importance. We must learn, again and again, that we need less discussion—and more prayer.”
- He made the same essential point to priests in Brindisi after his election as the 265th Peter: “Dear brother priests, ... be models of prayer, become masters of prayer. May your days be marked by times of prayer, during which, after Jesus' example, you engage in a regenerating conversation with the Father. I know it is not easy to stay faithful to this daily appointment with the Lord, especially today when the pace of life is frenetic and worries absorb us more and more. Yet we must convince ourselves: the time he spends in prayer is **the most important time in a priest's life**, in which divine grace acts with greater effectiveness, making his ministry fruitful. **The first service to render to the community is prayer**. And therefore, time for prayer must be given a true priority in our life. I know that there are many urgent things: as regards myself, an audience, a document to study, a meeting or something else. But if we are not interiorly in communion with God we cannot even give anything to

others. Therefore, God is the first priority. We must always reserve the time necessary to be in communion of prayer with our Lord (Priests in Brindisi, June 15, 2008).

- Bishops and Priests must be men, models, and *magistri* of prayer
 - I want to pick up on and amplify something Pope Benedict said in that last comment. God calls us to be men, models, master-teachers of prayer.
 - Dear priests, I would like to address you first of all. I know that you work with zeal and intelligence, sparing no effort. The Lord Jesus, to whom you have consecrated your life, is with you! May you always be men of prayer, so as also to be teachers of prayer. May your days be marked by times of prayer during which, modelling yourselves on Jesus, you enter into a regenerating conversation with the Father. (Palermo, Oct 3, 2010)
 - Saint John Mary Vianney taught his parishioners primarily by the witness of his life. It was from his example that they learned to pray, halting frequently before the tabernacle for a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. (Letter to being Year for Priests, June 19, 2009)
 - Mystagogy, not pedagogy
 - Rather than a pedagogy Teresa's is a true "mystagogy" of prayer: she teaches those who read her works how to pray by praying with them. Indeed, she often interrupts her account or exposition with a prayerful outburst. (Catechesis on St. Teresa of Avila)
 - That's what the faithful expect most, even if they make other demands on us.
 - The faithful expect only one thing from priests: that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God. The priest is not asked to be an expert in economics, construction or politics. He is expected to be an expert in the spiritual life. ... In the face of the temptations of relativism or the permissive society, there is absolutely no need for the priest to know all the latest, changing currents of thought; what the faithful expect from him is that he be a witness to the eternal wisdom contained in the revealed word. (Warsaw, May 25, 2006)
 - I have the impression that people understand and also appreciate it when a priest is with God, when he is concerned with his office of being the person who prays for others: "we", they say, "cannot pray so much, you must do it for us: basically, it is your job, as it were, to be the one who prays for us". They want a priest who honestly endeavours to live with the Lord and then is available to men and women - the suffering, the dying, the sick, children, young people (I would say that they are the priorities) - but also who can distinguish between things that others do better than him, thereby making room for those gifts. (Priests of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone, August 6, 2008)
 - The priest/bishop is called to be an icon of Jesus, what we might call *in persona Christi orantis*
 - Jesus' life had a two-fold direction: he lived for the Father and for others. In sacred Scripture we see Jesus as a man of prayer, one who spends entire nights in dialogue with the Father. Through his prayer, he made his own humanity, and the humanity of us all, part of his filial relation to the Father. (Mariazell Sept 8, 2007)
 - The core of the priesthood is being friends of Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we truly speak in persona Christi, even if our inner remoteness from Christ cannot jeopardize the validity of the Sacrament. Being a friend of Jesus, being a priest, means being a man of prayer. In this way we recognize him and emerge from the ignorance of simple servants. We thus learn to live, suffer and act with him and for him. Being a priest means becoming an ever closer friend of Jesus Christ with the whole of our existence. The world needs God - not just any god but the God of Jesus Christ, the God who made himself flesh and blood, who loved us to the point of dying for us, who rose and created within himself room for man. This God must

live in us and we in him. This is our priestly call: only in this way can our action as priests bear fruit. (Chrism Mass, April 13, 2006)

- Christ prayed for us as his priests to abide in him in prayer
 - In a singular way, Jesus prayed for Simon Peter, and sacrificed himself for him, because he would say to him one day, on the banks of the Sea of Tiberias: "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21: 16-17). In the same way, every priest is the recipient of Christ's personal prayer, and only because of this he is able to collaborate with him in feeding the flock, which is completely and only the Lord's. ... to be ordained priests means to enter in a sacramental and existential way into Christ's prayer for "his own". From this we priests derive a particular vocation to pray in a strongly Christocentric sense: we are called, that is, to "remain" in Christ as the evangelist John likes to repeat (cf. Jn 1: 35-39; 15: 4-10) and this abiding in Christ is achieved especially through prayer. Our ministry is totally tied to this "abiding" which is equivalent to prayer, and draws from this its efficacy. In this perspective, we must think of the **different forms of prayer of a priest**, first of all daily Holy Mass. The Eucharistic Celebration is the greatest and highest act of prayer, and constitutes the center and the source from which even the other forms receive "nourishment": the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic adoration, Lectio divina, the Holy Rosary, meditation. All these expressions of prayer, which have their center in the Eucharist, fulfill the words of Jesus in the priest's day and in all his life: "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn 10: 14-15). In fact, this "knowing" and "being known" in Christ and, through him, in the Most Holy Trinity, is none other than the most true and deep reality of prayer. The priest who prays a lot, and who prays well, is progressively drawn out of himself and evermore united to Jesus the Good Shepherd and the Servant of the Brethren. In conforming to him, even the priest "gives his life" for the sheep entrusted to him. No one takes it from him: he offers it himself, in unity with Christ the Lord, who has the power to give his life and the power to take it back not only for himself, but also for his friends, bound to him in the Sacrament of Orders. Thus the life of Christ, Lamb and Shepherd, is communicated to the whole flock, through the consecrated ministers (Priestly Ordination, Rome, May 3, 2009)
 - We note that Peter's profession is linked to a moment of Prayer: "as he [Jesus] was praying alone the disciples were with him", St Luke says (9:18). In other words the disciples become involved in Jesus' absolutely unique being and speaking with the Father. And so it is that they are granted to see the Teacher in his intimate condition as Son, they are granted to see what the others do not see; from "being with him", from "being with him" in prayer, derives a knowledge that goes beyond the people's opinion to reach the profound identity of Jesus, to reach the truth. Here we are given a very precise instruction for the priest's life and mission: he is called to rediscover in prayer the ever new face of his Lord and the most authentic content of his mission. Only those who have a profound relationship with the Lord are grasped by him, can take him to others, can be sent out. "Abiding with him" must always accompany the exercise of the priestly ministry. It must be its central part, even and above all in difficult moments when it seems that the "things that need doing" should have priority, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we must always "abide with him". (June 20, 2010, Vatican, End of Year for Priests)
 - About his own prayer, he said in Light of the World (16): "I am no mystic. But it is correct that as Pope one has even more cause to pray and to entrust oneself entirely to God. For I see very well that almost everything I have to do is something I myself cannot do at all. That fact already forces me, so to speak, to place myself in the Lord's hands and say to him: 'You do it, if you want it!' In this sense prayer and contact with God are now even more necessary and also even more natural and self-evident than before."
- Turning pastoral work into prayer
 - There is always a certain tension between what I absolutely have to do and what spiritual reserves I must have. I always see it in St Augustine, who complains about this in his preaching. I have already cited him: "I long to live with the Word of God from morning to

night but I have to be with you". Augustine nonetheless finds this balance by being always available but also by keeping for himself moments of prayer and meditation on the Sacred Word, because otherwise he would no longer be able to say anything. Here in particular, I would like to underline what you said about the fact that pastoral work must never be mere strategy or administrative work but must always be a spiritual task. Nor, of course, can the latter be totally lacking either, because we are on this earth and such problems exist: the efficient management of money, etc. This too is a sector that cannot be totally ignored. Nonetheless, the fundamental emphasis must be on the very fact that being a pastor is in itself a spiritual act. You rightly referred to John's Gospel, chapter 10, in which the Lord describes himself as the "Good Shepherd". And as a first definitive moment, Jesus says that the Pastor goes first. In other words, it is he who shows the way, he is the first to be an example to others, the first to take the road that is the road for others. The Pastor leads the way. This means that he himself lives first of all on the Word of God; he is a man of prayer, a man of forgiveness, a man who receives and celebrates the sacraments as acts of prayer and encounter with the Lord. He is a man of charity, lived and practised, thus all the simple acts, conversation, encounter, everything that needs to be done, become spiritual acts in communion with Christ. His "*pro omnibus*" becomes our "*pro meis*". (Meeting with Clergy of Rome, Feb 22, 2007)

- Unless we have a truly spiritual life through prayer, unless we spiritualize our work, then we cannot help the Church become who she is called to be.
 - By interiorizing this vision we can also attract our people to this vision, which understands that the Church is not merely a large structure, one of these supranational bodies that exist. Although she is a body, the Church is the Body of Christ, hence, she is a spiritual body, as St Paul said. She is a spiritual reality. I think this is very important: that people see that the Church is not a supranational organization nor an administrative body or power, that she is not a social agency, but indeed that although she does social and supranational work, she is a spiritual body. I consider that in our prayers with the people, listening with the people to the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments with the People of God, acting with Christ in charity, etc., and especially in our homilies, we should disseminate this vision. It seems to me, in this regard, that the homily affords a marvelous opportunity to be close to the people and to communicate the spirituality taught by the Council. And it thus seems to me that if the homily is developed from prayer, from listening to the Word of God; it is a communication of the content of the Word of God. (Meeting with Clergy of Rome, Feb 22, 2007)
 - The reading from the Acts of the Apostles speaks of how, on the day of Pentecost, under the signs of a strong wind and fire, the Holy Spirit sweeps into the community of the disciples of Jesus who are in prayer, thus bringing the Church into being. (Pentecost, Rome, May 15, 2005)
- The importance of praying the Liturgy of the Hours as part of this unceasing prayer for others
 - [Another space of true freedom] to which the Church, so to speak, obliges us, and in so doing liberates us, is the Liturgy of the Hours. Let us aim to recite it as a true prayer, a prayer in communion with the Israel of the Old and New Testaments, a prayer in communion with all who pray throughout history, a prayer in communion with Jesus Christ, a prayer that arises from the deepest "I", from the deepest subject of these prayers. In this way we draw into our prayer those others who lack the time or the energy or the capacity to pray. As people of prayer, we represent others when we pray and in so doing, we fulfil a pastoral ministry of the first order. This is not withdrawing into the private sphere, it is a pastoral priority, it is a pastoral activity in which our own priesthood is renewed, and we are once again filled by Christ. We include others in the communion of the praying Church and at the same time, we allow the power of prayer, the presence of Jesus Christ, to flow into this world. (Freising, Sept 14, 2006)
- How prayer leads to charity.

Jesuit twilight always spring to mind: a classical image, that of St Francis Xavier looking at China. Art has so often depicted this passing, Xavier's end. So has literature, in that beautiful piece by Pemán. At the end, without anything but before the Lord; thinking of this does me good. The other sunset, the other image that comes to mind as an example is that of Fr. Arrupe in his last conversation in the refugee camp, when he said to us — something he used to say — “I say this as if it were my swan song: pray”. Prayer, union with Jesus. Having said these words he took the plane to Rome and upon arrival suffered a stroke that led to the sunset — so long and so exemplary — of his life. Two sunsets, two images, both of which it will do us all good to look at and to return to. And we should ask for the grace that our own passing will resemble theirs.

- “Do your resolve to pray without ceasing to almighty God for the holy people and to carry out the office of High Priest without reproach?” Let's ask that above all, we will be found watchful in constant prayer when Christ comes, so that we may spend our eternity continuing to pray and do good here on earth.