

# Prayer in the Life of Those Sent on Mission

Msgr. Roger Landry • TPMS Missionary Preaching Academy • July 3, 2026



# The Foundation of Prayer in the Missionary's Life



- We have focused throughout this Missionary Preaching Academy on a lot of important practical skills necessary to be an effective preacher, from homily construction, to delivery, to what to do before and after preaching in parishes.
- Most important of all for someone to be a truly effective apostle is a profound life of prayer.
- Cardinal Ratzinger 2000: “Don Didimo says, for example: ‘Jesus preached by day, by night he prayed.’ With these few words, he wished to say: Jesus had to acquire the disciples from God. The same is always true. We ourselves cannot gather men. We must acquire them by God for God. All methods are empty without the foundation of prayer. The word of the announcement must always be drenched in an intense life of prayer.”



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- Jesus himself told us that the most important thing we need to do for the missions is to pray for it. “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few. So pray to the Master of the harvest for laborers for his harvest.” This is not just praying for *new* laborers but for all the laborers.
- Jesus was regularly training his apostles to pray, by his example, by his recorded prayers, by what he taught about the proper dispositions of prayer, and by teaching them the Our Father.
- St. Mark tells us, “He appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach” (Mk 3:14). This time with Jesus was a time in which they focused on him and with him on the Father.



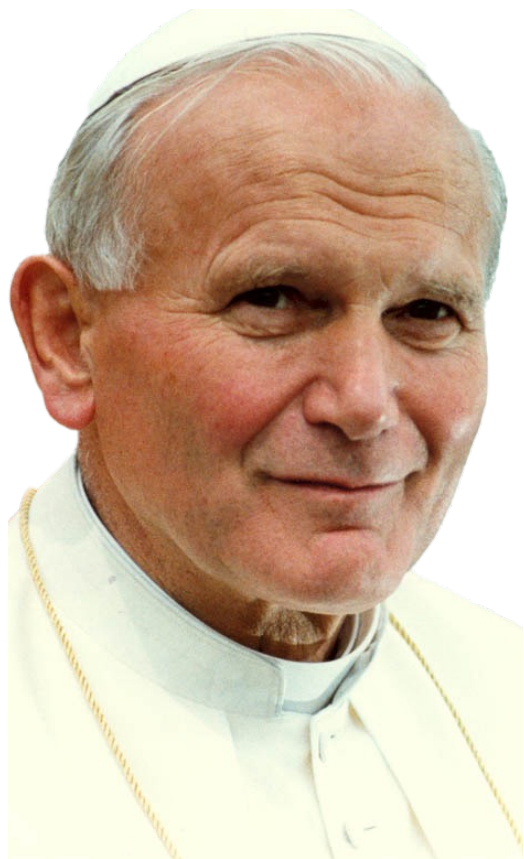
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- After their apostolic journeys, Jesus wanted them to return to prayer. As St. Mark writes, “The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place” (Mk 6:30-31).
- Prayer for missions is one of the reasons why St. Therese of the Child Jesus is co-patroness of the missions together with St. Francis Xavier. Her work praying is just as important as his work bringing the faith to four different countries.
- We saw the importance of prayer in the life of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, “the woman who always prays.”



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- St. John Paul II wrote, “Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so **that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God's grace**. In his Letters, St. Paul often asks the faithful to pray for him so that he might proclaim the Gospel with confidence and conviction” (RM 78).
- Pope Benedict said to Italian priests in 2008: “If your faith is to be strong and vigorous, ... **it must be nourished with assiduous prayer**. Thus be **models of prayer, become masters of prayer**. ... 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.**”



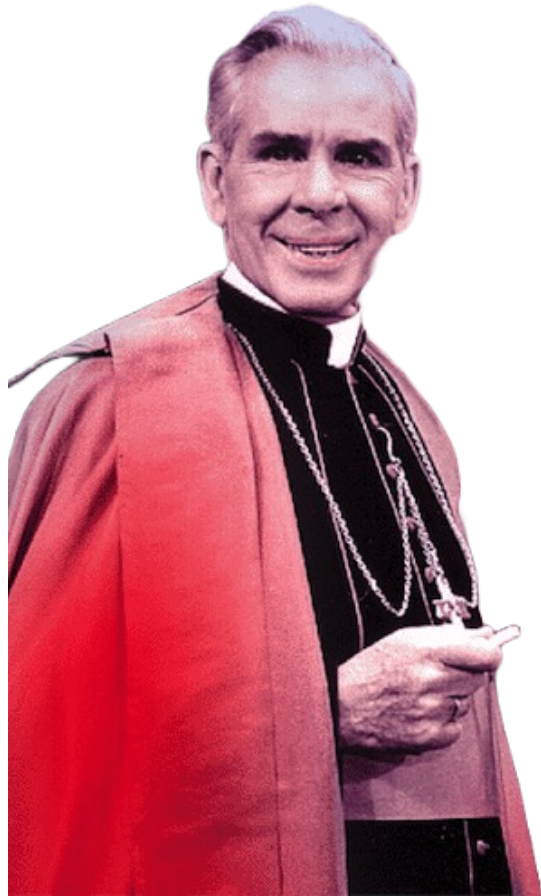
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- To Polish priests in 2006, Benedict said: “The faithful expect only one thing from priests: **that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God.** The priest is not asked to be an expert in economics, construction or politics. **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.**”
- About the Curé of Ars, Pope Benedict said: “St. John Vianney is undoubtedly a model of **an existence made prayer.**”



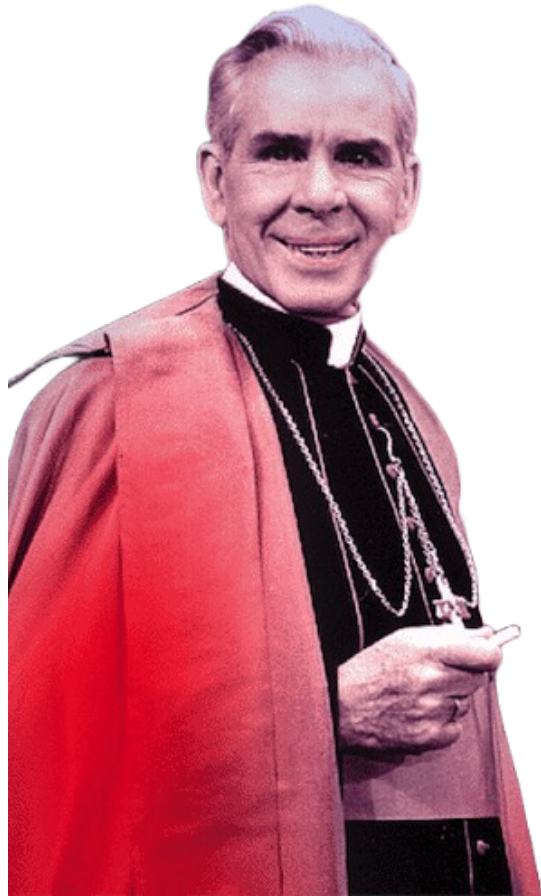
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- One great preacher of the missions whose life was indeed an existence made prayer is Blessed-to-be Fulton Sheen.
- He prepared his homilies before the Blessed Sacrament. He wrote, “How much more our words would burn as we preach if we prepared our sermons before the Eucharistic Lord; ... if, before preaching, we prayed for five minutes to the Holy Spirit for Pentecostal fire; if we kept the Scriptures ever open near us, that we might gird ourselves with their truth when mounting the pulpit!”
- Prayer was where he got his fire. “What answer to judgment shall the priest give who squanders hours a day on newspapers, television and magazines yet cannot spare half an hour of the Lord’s time to prepare his soul for the pulpit?”



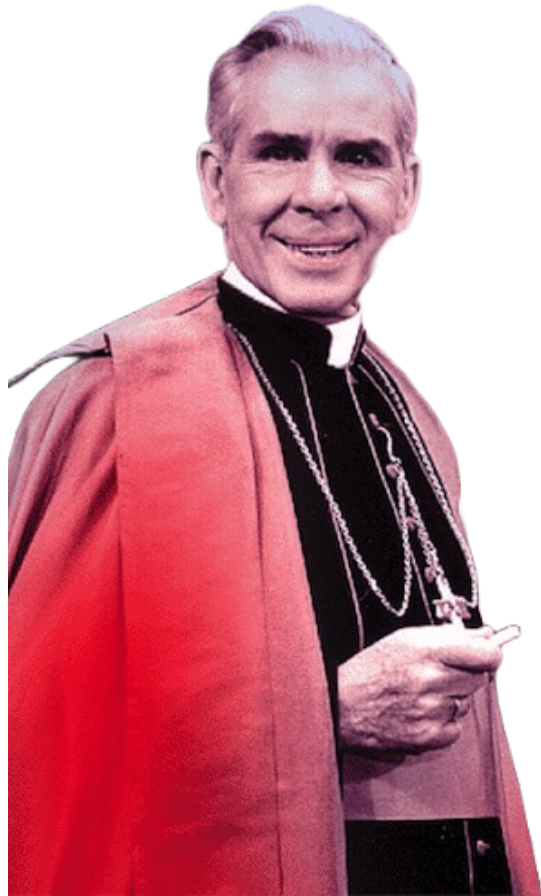
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- He said, “Preaching is not the act of giving a sermon; it is the art of making a preacher. The preacher then becomes the sermon.” That’s the sculpting Jesus tries to do in us when we are before him.
- “To be a good speaker, there must be imagination, there must be fire. There cannot be fire and passion unless there is tremendous love — a love of truth, a love of country, a love of a cause... If men are indifferent to any great ideal, they can never be on fire.”
- “The preacher who bores others in the pulpit is a bore before he ever gets into it. He is not in love. He is not on fire with Christ.”
- Prayer is where we find that fire.



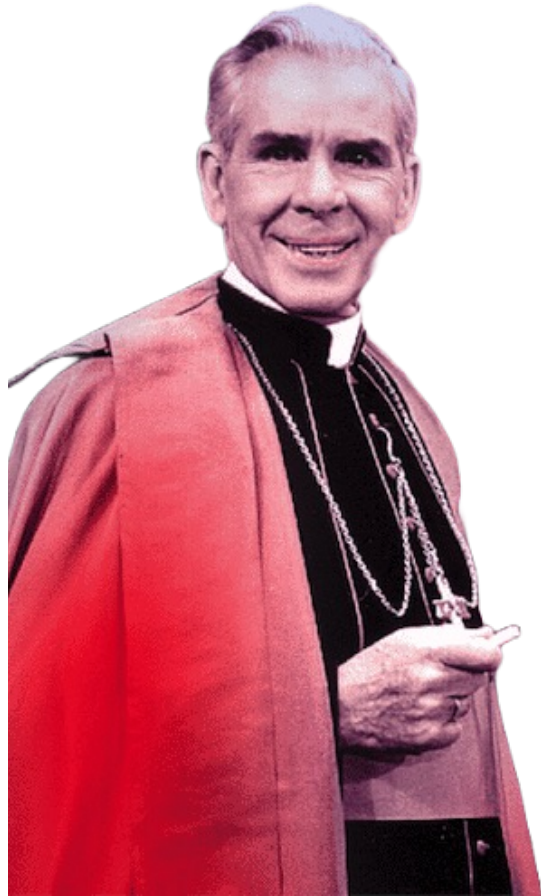
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- That's one of the reasons why Sheen became the greatest preacher in the history of the Church on the importance of a daily holy hour, especially for priests.
- On the day of his priestly ordination, he made a resolution to “spend a continuous Holy Hour every day in the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.” He was faithful to that resolution for the 61 years of his priesthood.
- He gave several reasons why he thought it was crucial in his life and in the life of every preacher of the Gospel.
- First, he said, the Holy Hour is a sharing in the work of redemption. When Jesus asked for the apostles to spend an hour with him, he was asking for an hour of reparation to combat the “hour” of evil.



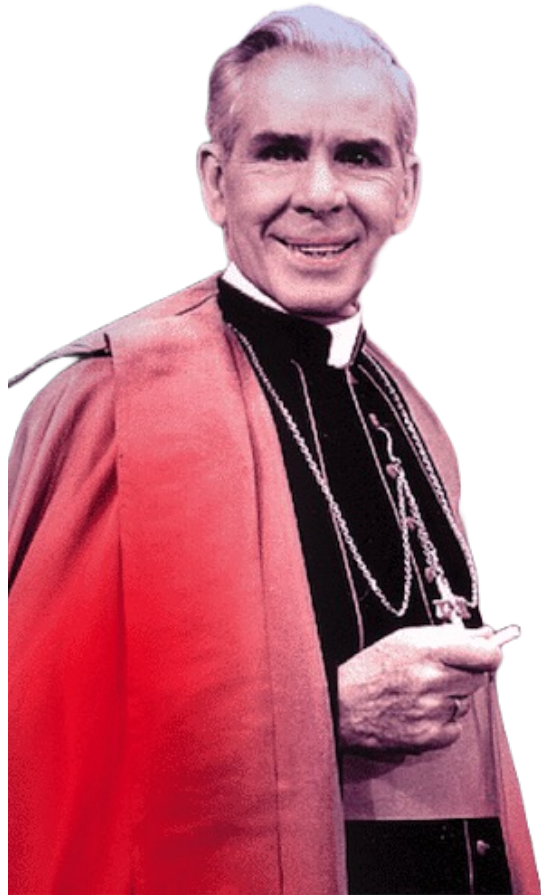
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- Second, he said, the only time Our Lord asked the Apostles for anything was the night he went into his agony. He asked not for an hour of activity but for an hour of companionship.
- Third, he stated, a daily holy hour is an opportunity to grow in Jesus' likeness. We become like that which we gaze upon. Looking at the Eucharistic Lord for an hour transforms the heart in a mysterious way as the face of Moses was transformed after his companionship with God on the mountain.
- Sheen said that the purpose of a daily Eucharistic holy hour was "to encourage deep personal encounter with Christ. ... God is constantly inviting us to come to Him, to hold converse with Him, to ask for such things as we need and to experience what a blessing there is in fellowship with Him."



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- A holy hour becomes more necessary, he added, when the “honeymoon” phase of the priesthood wears off. “Neither theological knowledge nor social action alone is enough to keep us in love with Christ unless both are preceded by a personal encounter with him.”
- He said that without a holy hour our vocation can be in danger. “A priest begins to fail his priesthood when he fails in his love of the Eucharist. Too often it is assumed that Judas fell because he loved money. ... [But] the beginning of the fall of Judas and the end of Judas both revolved around the Eucharist. The first mention that Our Lord knew who it was who would betray him is at the end of the sixth chapter of John, which is the announcement of the Eucharist. The fall of Judas came the night Our Lord gave the Eucharist, the night of the Last Supper.”



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- In personal witness, he stated: “The Holy Hour, quite apart from all its positive spiritual benefits, kept my feet from wandering too far. Being tethered to a tabernacle, one's rope for finding other pastures is not so long. That dim tabernacle lamp, however pale and faint, had some mysterious luminosity to darken the brightness of ‘bright lights.’ Even when it seemed so unprofitable and lacking in spiritual intimacy, I still had the sensation of being at least like a dog at the master's door, ready in case he called me.”
- He added, “It is impossible for me to explain how helpful the Holy Hour has been in preserving my vocation.”



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- So we need to look at various aspects of prayer in the life of missionary preachers.
- **Personal Mental Prayer** — This is where we spend time with the Master, where we become like him, where his thoughts become our thoughts and his words our words. This is where we speak to him about what he would like to say through us to the people to whom he is sending us. Like Sheen and the Church encourage in the strongest terms, this is where homilies ought to be born.
- **Prayer of the Mass** — The way we celebrate Mass is the most important homily we'll ever preach. Then it becomes credible why we preach the missions, because we're not just preaching the "words" of God but the Word made flesh; we're not just making converts, but building communities, because *Ecclesia vivit de Eucharistia*.



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- **Prayer of the Breviary** — Our "office," or job, is to pray for the Church five times a day. We are "invited" to celebrate daily Mass, but "obliged" to pray the Liturgy of the Hours each day according to the approved books.
  - At our diaconal ordination, we're asked: "Are you resolved to maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer appropriate to your way of life and, in keeping with what is required of you, to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours for the Church and for the whole world?"
  - At our priestly ordination, we're asked: "Do you resolve to implore with us God's mercy upon the people entrusted to your care by observing the command to pray without ceasing?"



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- Canon 276 §1. In leading their lives clerics are especially bound to **pursue holiness because they are consecrated to God.** ... §2. In order for them to pursue this perfection: (1) first of all they are faithfully and untiringly to fulfill the duties of pastoral ministry; (2) they are to nourish their spiritual life from the two-fold table of Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist; priests are therefore **earnestly invited to offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist daily**; (3) priests as well as deacons aspiring to the priesthood **are obliged to fulfill the liturgy of the hours daily in accordance with the proper and approved liturgical books**; (4) they are also bound to make a **retreat** according to the prescriptions of particular law; (5) they are to be conscientious **in devoting time regularly to mental prayer,** ... and in using other common and particular means for their sanctification.”



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- Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours: “The Church commissions them to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours in order that, at least in their persons, the duty of the whole community may be carried out regularly and reliably, and the prayer of Christ continue unceasingly in the Church.”
- “Priests, united as they are with the bishop and the whole presbyterium, are themselves representative in a special way of Christ the priest, and so share the same responsibility of praying to God for the people entrusted to them, and indeed for the whole world. Hence, bishops and priests and other sacred ministers, who have received from the Church **the mandate** of celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours, **should recite the full sequence of Hours each day**, as far as possible at the appropriate times.”



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- **Intercessory Prayer** — Especially at Mass, we should regularly be praying to the Harvest Master for laborers (missionaries), for the people to whom they are trying to bring the Gospel, for all those who have not yet heard God's saving message. This can be done at Mass, but should be done at other times too.
- **The Holy Rosary** — Archbishop Sheen devised the World Mission Rosary in 1951 to help us pray to the Harvest Master, through the intercession of the Queen of the Apostles, for the needs of the missions. He had colored beads so that we would pray for the missions in Africa, Oceania, Europe, America(s) and Asia.
- **Pray Our Work** — Not just enough to do our work, but we're called to do it like Abel, to work like Martha with the contemplative heart of Mary. All our work is meant to be part of the offertory at Mass.



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- Jesus calls us to pray always, which means to unite all part of our life to him, so that together with him, we might offer his whole mission to the Father for the salvation of the human race.
- To be effective mission preachers, we must first be priests of intense prayer, of true communion with Jesus and with his Church.
- The Lord who calls us to this vocation will give us everything he knows we need to live it.

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## Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read.  
Teach what you believe.  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.



Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and iHeart Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
*Msgr. Roger J. Landry*

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# Questions and Comments

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