

## *The Texts of the Convivium*

### **LET US REDISCOVER AND RESTORE TO HONOUR THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT US**

The prayer that Jesus taught us is the Our Father.

Let us remember the proposal of it from the text of the Gospel: “He [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’. And he [Jesus] said to them:” (Lk. 11, 1-2) “When you pray say: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven our trespassers; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’ ” (Mt 6, 2-8).

In the first millennium of the history of the Church this prayer was also recited repetitively, in the same way as the rosary is recited today.

As a matter of fact, repetitive prayer is practiced in the most different religious traditions, starting from the most widely spread ones: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam. If necessary, rosaries of various shapes are used in repetitively reciting the prayer. In the Christian circle, the Catholicism rosary is an expression of this kind of prayer, and, in the Eastern Churches, the “prayer of Jesus” (“Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner”).

The repetitive prayer could prove to be very fruitful, to the point of transforming man into living prayer.

Throughout the first millennium of the history of the Latin Church the recital of the “rosaries of the Our Father”, became common practice, where the Our Father was repeated according to the number of the beads of a rosary necklace.

Rosaries of the Our Father are also recited today, in which at every “mystery” the usual recital of the ten Hail Marys is substituted by ten Our Fathers. This kind of practice, however, only concerns a slender minority of believers.

As a matter of fact, in the second millennium, the rosary became Marian: in a certain way the Hail Mary has substituted the Our Father.

There is no doubt that the Hail Mary is a truly beautiful and extremely valid prayer, however one has to recall that Jesus taught us a different prayer, and it should be our debt to grant it our preference.

He is immersed in continual colloquy with his Father. In the oration to the Father we are praying together with Jesus.

The divine Master even urged us to pray insistently. This is attested by the parable of the tiresome friend: “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him: ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within: ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything’; I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs” (Lk. 11, 5-8).

The parable of the widow who insists on asking for justice is confirmation of this. Jesus also tells his disciples this parable, to make them see “the need always to pray and not to lose heart”. Well, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor

regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying: 'Vindicate me against my adversary'. For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself: 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming' ". And the Lord said: "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily" (Lk. 18, 1-8).

Jesus gave the example of a truly assiduous prayer, obviously addressed to his Father (Mk 1, 35; 6, 46; 14, 32-42; Lk 5, 16; 6, 12; 9, 18; 11, 1; 22, 41-42).

The apostle Paul unites his invitation to continual prayer: "Pray constantly" (1 Thess 5, 17), in the same way as "without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers" (Rom 1, 9); "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication" (Eph 6, 18); as far as I am concerned, "I give thanks to my God, always making remembrance of you [Philemon] in my prayers" (Philem, v. 4); "But she who is truly a widow... continues in supplications and prayers night and day" (1 Tim 5, 5).

In the tradition of the Latin Church the repetitive prayer par excellence is the Rosary. Why should the Our Father not be repropounded in this form? Here is a precise and very definite proposal.

The Marian rosary is made up of five "mysteries" each one of which is divided up into one Paternoster and ten Ave Maria, followed by a Gloria Patri. The rosary of the Father could also be divided up into five "mysteries", and the recital of each one could start with a Gloria Patri. The rosary still has three beads, which could correspond to three Ave Maria preceded and followed by a Gloria.

What reality could the single mysteries be named after? In the first mystery one could contemplate the First Person of the Trinity, the Father. In the second, the Second Person, the Son. In the third, the Holy Spirit. In the fourth, the Incarnation of God on this earth, Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the fifth, the Kingdom of God and the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the sweet gentle image and the immaculate heart.

God is our Creator, the Prime Cause, the ultimate Aim, the supreme Good, the Alpha and the Omega, therefore the essential reference point. Religion should be concentrated on God.

Minor figures, however respectable they may be, should not come between God and us: let the theologians propose them as ways which lead to God, but the danger that such figures could conceal God from us rather than leading us to Him nevertheless lays waiting. Our attention should be focused on the Goal.

A good example of this is given to us by the Muslims, who also have a rosary, with thirty-three beads, but they recite it to remember the ninety-nine perfections of God.

The practice of the rosary of the Father could only come from a return of attention to God. Let us hope that the moment is not too far away and that we ourselves will do something to hurry it up by anticipating it in our devotions.