

44. *It is no longer I who pray...*

I can well understand the feeling that impelled you to write to me: "My daily mental prayer seems laughable to me. I cannot imagine that this stammering prayer of a minuscule creature could interest the perfect and infinite God." You are keenly aware of the wretchedness of creatures, and of the majesty of God. This is a precious and essential insight of faith. It is certainly a gift of grace. But there is another insight of faith that I would like you to grasp, so as to give you a lofty opinion of your daily mental prayer, miserable as it may seem to you.

Let's begin by getting a broader perspective. Before speaking of your personal mental prayer, let us talk about Christ's mental prayer. Bérulle, in a passage that I particularly like, celebrates the uniqueness of the prayer of Jesus Christ:

"From all eternity, there was indeed an infinitely adorable God, but there was not yet an infinite adorer. There was certainly a God worthy of being infinitely loved and served, but there was no infinite man or servant capable of rendering an infinite service and giving an infinite love. O Jesus, you are now that adorer, that man, that servant, infinite in power, in quality, and in dignity, fully adequate for this duty and for this divine homage. You are this man who loves, adores, and serves the supreme majesty as it deserves to be loved, served, and honored."

This text reminds us of Jesus withdrawing to the solitude of the mountains during the night, in order to pray. And above all, it reminds us of Calvary, where the perfect adorer offered God perfect worship.

Should we ask ourselves whether the perfect prayer of Jesus rendered the prayer of ordinary men and women futile, and definitively superseded it?

We can quickly answer that this prayer of Christ, far from obviating the prayers of the human race (all those stammering prayers since the origins of mankind, all the sacrifices of all religions and all eras), gathers them into itself and offers them to God. In Christ's prayer, and through it, they have admirable meaning and efficacy.

But there is a still more wonderful answer. Christ wants his prayer to resound throughout the universe. He wants the most ordinary Christian at prayer to have much more to offer than hesitant words and awkward sentiments. He wants him to have access to the very prayer of the Son of God. He wants all men and women to be able to take possession of his prayer, make it their own, and present it to God.

But that is still not saying enough. Jesus Christ does not merely want his prayer to be our own as a possession which we are free to dispose of. He wants his prayer to be implanted into the innermost depths of our being, to be the soul of our soul, so that we can in all truth repeat after St. Paul: "*The life I live now is not my own...*" (Gal 2:20). I

pray, but it is no longer I who pray, but Christ who prays within me. It is the Spirit of the Son, the Holy Spirit, who makes the filial cry, “*Abba, Father!*”, resound in me. And so Christ’s prayer, far from supplanting the prayer of men and women, wonderfully increases its value.

During the Easter Vigil, in the darkened church, the flame of the paschal candle is communicated little by little to the multitude of little candles held in the hands of the faithful. In the same way, Christ, through baptism, gradually wins men and women to himself all over the world, and makes his filial prayer rise up in and from their souls.

It is his Son that the Father recognizes in all the baptized. Laughable as their prayer may seem to be, the Father recognizes in it the prayer of his own Son.