



*"Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God"*

**August 2015: Reflection - (Heb 10:5-22)**

We have all experienced the peace that prayer brings into our lives. In the midst of our struggles and anxieties, we turn to God to find refuge, affirmation, mercy, and healing. As we reflected last month, the Lord longs for us to draw near to Him in this way. Just as human life begins with the tenderness of a mother, the spiritual life is rooted in this affirming embrace of God. Nonetheless, St. Paul writes, "I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger" (1 Cor 3:2). From the life of Jesus we learn that the filial relationship we enjoy with God, the intimacy of prayer, goes still deeper than receiving His comfort and affirmation.

We have been reflecting on prayer with the analogy of *drawing near* to God. We imagine ourselves approaching God like we approach a loved one, or like a child running into its father's arms. While these are beautiful images, the spiritual movement of drawing near to God is in fact much more profound than what can be captured by this analogy. When we come physically close to someone, we ourselves do not change in the process. But when we come spiritually close to God, our very self becomes transformed and illumined by His grace. We become "partakers in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). *Coming near* to God means *becoming*

*like* God. Authentic prayer moves us to God in this way. As the Psalmist prays, “Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...” (Ps 24:3). Likewise, Jesus teaches us that before approaching God’s altar with our gift, we must first be reconciled to our brothers and sisters (Mt 5:23-24). These examples point us to another analogy that we must also employ in understanding prayer. Bringing our hearts close to God implies not only consolation, but also a change, a *turning*. And this is the literal meaning of the word *conversion*, “to turn around.” God our Father longs for His children to draw near to Him, but He longs for us to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews, quoting from the Psalms, writes that when Christ was coming into the world, He said, “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God.” This is the theme that runs consistently and perfectly through every moment of the life and ministry of Christ. As Pope Benedict writes, “The mark of the Antichrist is the fact that he speaks in his own name. The sign of the Son is his communion with the Father. The Son introduces us into the Trinitarian communion...” Conversion is not only that distinct moment when we personally accepted Jesus. Conversion is turning to God, coming into communion with Him, putting an end to the rebellion in us, and becoming wholly aligned with His will. In an age-old tradition of the Church, it is believed that Lucifer at the defection of the fallen angels exclaimed, “Non serviam!”, which means, “I will not serve!” St. Michael the Archangel replied powerfully, “Serviam!” As an effective remedy for the rebellion that we too experience in our hearts, for the disobedience that runs deep within us, many Catholics wake up every morning praying just this powerful word. *Serviam!*

The intimacy that God is calling us into as sons and daughters, the beauty of authentic *filial prayer*, is this submission of our whole self to God, the submission of our will to God’s will. Jesus prays intimately to His Father, “My Father... not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39). This is the nearness that God is longing for with each one of us. This is also the ultimate good that we can reach in this life. And since all this is possible only through a life of prayer, it is no wonder that Padre Pio would often say, “I want to be only a poor friar who prays.”

In praying everyday, and even at different times during the day, we can make this process of frequently turning to God, of quieting our rebellion, of offering ourselves to Him, the very foundation of our daily life. Drawing near to Him in prayer is not just a retreat from the world, but it is also our source of strength and the steady light that shows us how to live life in the most meaningful, courageous, and loving way possible, according to the will of God.

*“In you today — He wants to relive His complete submission to His Father — allow Him to do so.” —*  
Bl. Mother Teresa