

# Look Closely, The Spirit of God is Quietly Working!

We have considered the four “Maxims” of Brother Lawrence over the past weeks, and now we move into considering ways in which they can be aptly applied through prayerful practice that takes into account every moment of life.

Look closely, the Spirit of God is quietly working, and nurturing a new life for us, within us. Don’t be frightened by this. Don’t be overwhelmed. God supplies this Spirit for our sake — helping us to realize our union with him, just as he is constantly in union with us. Developing a prayer of the presence of God is the first criteria. Yet these very practices help us to attain this awareness of God’s presence in our lives, similar to us using the gifts of the Spirit as we seek to grasp the fullness of the Spirit.

## ***PRACTICES NECESSARY TO ACQUIRE THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.***

These six practices should not be foreign to the person who has been growing in faith and prayer since a child. Brother Lawrence’s ‘practices’ will be studied during the next three weeks. Here, are the first two in italic print.

***First.*** *The holiest, most universal and most necessary practice in the spiritual life is the presence of God. To practice the presence of God is to take pleasure in and become accustomed to His Divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly in our hearts with Him at all times, and at every moment, especially in times of temptation, pain, spiritual dryness, revulsion to spiritual things, and even unfaithfulness and sin.*

At this point in time, we may be saying to ourselves, “If this is the holiest and most necessary practice for a spiritual life — and I’m not sure I understand what has been shared over the past seven weeks — I may be in trouble!” Relax and breathe.

The beginning tells the whole story. “Holiest.” Only God is holy. Yet, we are called to share in this holiness that is of God. It is given to us by God at baptism when we come to a sharing in his divine life. As St. Peter instructed in his first letter: “...but, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every

aspect of your conduct, for it is written, ‘Be holy because I am holy.’” [1 Peter 1:15-16]

It would be wise for the person seeking an awareness of the presence of God, and a life of prayer that fosters such a union with God, to read the entirety of this letter. It speaks well of what we have been learning all along through these seven weeks.



Now, as this first practice indicates, “*To practice the presence of God is to take pleasure in and become accustomed to His Divine company...*” We some-

## **GOD FIRST**

Year Two, Part 9

*The Prayer of Awareness*

times make things much more difficult than they really are. “**Becoming accustomed to His Divine company...**” is our reaching out and talking to a friend! Except,

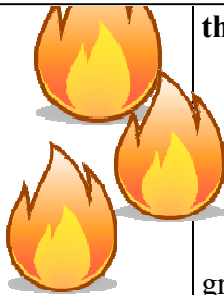
**that friend is found most intimately within the self.**

It is God always present to us. It is the Spirit of God leading us to the core of our being where the soul meets the Maker, where God awaits us.

The greatest rewards of this first practice are found when we do reach out when we hurt the most and feel the least like praying. The times of greatest struggle are the times we most need to acknowledge the presence of God with us, and to find ourselves sitting quietly in what Merton calls, “The Hidden Ground of Love.” Its meaning is what many of us were taught when much younger: “God’s grace (life, love, presence) is greater than anything we may face.” So when we begin to feel ourselves moving away from this presence, we need to acknowledge that this is when we most need to seek the divine presence of God’s love. We move into heart-to-heart dialogue, telling of our fears, our pains, frustrations, angers, sinfulness, temptations, and more, so we can then feel God’s presence strengthening us all the more. This is how we learn to grow beyond these frailties.

***Second.*** *We must apply ourselves continually to the end that all our actions may be little spontaneous conversations with God, coming from purity and simplicity of heart.*

For the young, as shocking as it may seem, before the age of computers, memory was found in



people, not machines. Memorization was accomplished by our repeating again and again formulas, spelling words, history facts, science terms, etc., etc. For those learning Latin in order to serve at the altar,



it was a constant, “Say it again... Say it again... Say it again.” And it led to us doing the same thing as we walked to the bus stop, or in challenging classmates. **Repetition of holy actions, not just good actions, slowly filter into every aspect of life. And we**

**slowly recognize them rooted in the Hidden Ground of Love, and in the presence and call of God being lived and reflected in our own lives.**

We find ourselves focusing more and more on the presence of God, and the Hidden Ground of Love becomes less and less hidden to the seeker. The Spirit of God works quietly within us.

In this practice we come to realize that we do not need to fabricate anything. We simply need to be aware that God is present with us and therefore acting through us in word and deed — if we choose. At the same time, our awareness of God’s presence is equally seen in those people we respond to through our word and deed. As we increase our awareness of God at all times, this increase is reflected in how we respond. If done as a holy action, and repeated sufficiently, it soon becomes part and parcel of life — done without thinking. And we begin to acknowledge that the Spirit of God is alive and working in and through us.

**On our part, we must also realize that this takes place in the purity and simplicity of heart, that is, without an agenda other than that of God’s.** We do things with a love that soon is joined to the love God has for all people — unconditional. That’s why we need to see our practice of the prayer of the presence of God as essential when being tempted, even when we are faltering. God knows. God cares. And at that very moment, God is giving unconditionally, so that we may see the correction needed. The Spirit guiding us to wholeness.

Yes, the Spirit of God is quietly working. And that work will be found in the purity and simplicity of heart, which stands in sharp contrast to that found in the closed, cluttered heart set by the world.

**NEXT WEEK: Practices Three and Four**

*Missed Inserts may be found online at:  
[www.stjohnthebaptistparish.net](http://www.stjohnthebaptistparish.net)  
or by stopping at the rectory office.*

## **UNDERSTANDING FORMS OF OUR PRAYER**

*Sometimes we are hampered in our prayers simply because we have not come to fully understand them completely. We may hear about adoration but may not for one or another reason, grasp its purpose and, in our own lives, its power. Today we list three prayer forms. Next week we will conclude with three more prayer forms that may be a bit more familiar to us, but may well need clarification.*



**BLESSING** expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God’s gift and man’s acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man’s response to God’s gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.

Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer ascends in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father — we bless him for having blessed us; it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that descends through Christ from the Father — he blesses us. CCC 2626-27



**ADORATION** is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the “King of Glory,” respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications. CCC 2628



**PRAISE** is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God, testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the “one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.” CCC 2639



**NEXT WEEK: PRAYER OF PETITION,  
INTERCESSION, and  
THANKSGIVING**