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Humility and Charity

St. Francis of Assisi



This excerpt from a letter by St. Francis of Assisi (Opuscula, edit. Quaracchi 1949, 87-94) is used in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings for the feast (liturgical memorial) of Saint Francis of Assisi on October 4. Francesco di Bernadone was born in the Italian city of Assisi in 1182 to a merchant family. After a carefree youth, he renounced his father's wealth in response to God's call to follow him in a new form of religious life. St. Francis' desire was to live the Gospel lifestyle of our Lord and the apostles, and so embraces a life evangelical poverty and itinerant preaching. He established a rule for his growing band of disciples, called the Friars Minor or "little brothers," which was approved by Pope Innocent III. St. Francis then went on to found an order of cloistered nuns, known as the Poor Clares, and the "third order" of lay Franciscans who practiced penance while living in the secular world. St. Francis died in 1226.

It was through his archangel, Saint Gabriel, that the Father above made known to the holy and glorious Virgin Mary that the worthy, holy and glorious Word of the Father would come from heaven and take from her womb the real flesh of our human frailty. Though he was wealthy beyond reckoning, he still willingly chose to be poor with his blessed mother. And shortly before his passion he celebrated the Passover with his disciples. Then he prayed to his Father saying: *Father, if it be possible, let this cup be taken from me.*

Nevertheless, he reposed his will in the will of his Father. The Father willed that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to us and who was born for us, should through his own blood offer himself as a sacrificial victim on the altar of the cross. This was to be done not for himself through whom all things were made, but for our sins. It was intended to leave us an example of how to follow in his footsteps.

And he desires all of us to be saved through him, and to receive him with pure heart and chaste body.

O how happy and blessed are those who love the Lord and do as the Lord

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himself said in the gospel: *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul; and your neighbor as yourself.* Therefore, let us love God and adore him with pure heart and mind. This is his particular desire when he says: *True worshipers adore the Father in spirit and truth.* For all who adore him must do so in the spirit of truth. Let us also direct to him our praises and prayers saying: *Our Father, who art in heaven, since we must always pray and never grow slack.*

Furthermore, let us produce worthy fruits of penance. Let us also love our neighbors as ourselves. Let us have charity and humility. Let us give alms because these cleanse our souls from the stains of sin. Men lose all the material things they leave behind them in this world, but they carry with them the reward of their charity and the alms they give. For these they will receive from the Lord the reward and recompense they deserve. We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh. Rather we must be simple, humble and pure. We should never desire to be over others. Instead, we ought to be servants who are submissive to every human being for God's sake. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on all who live in this way and persevere in it to the end. He will permanently dwell in them. They will be the Father's children who do his work. They are the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[To read about St. Francis of Assisi trial by fire, click here!](#)

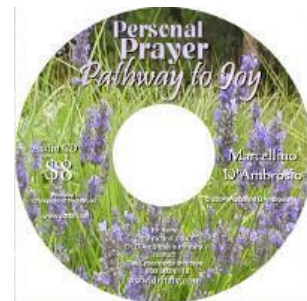
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Personal Prayer: Pathway to Joy

Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.

Everyone knows that personal prayer is important. You can't expect to deepen a relationship with God talking with Him only once a week! But how, in the midst of the busy, noisy life we all lead, can we develop a pattern of daily prayer that really works? And if we are successful in carving out some moments for prayer, what do we do? How should we spend that time in way that would be most fruitful?

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio has taught spiritual theology academically, but, more importantly, he's had plenty of practice applying that tradition to everyday life. With a family of seven, a business, and a non-profit corporation to run, he knows the challenges that a busy, active life can pose to the Christian who wants to pray. In this talk, he lays down principles and gives practical suggestions on how busy laypeople can develop a prayer life that leads to joy and personal transformation.



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