

EVE OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

What we should ask of God in prayer

39.1 First Point

In today's Gospel and in the rest of the same chapter, which gives us the prayer he addressed to his Father for his holy apostles, Jesus Christ teaches us what we should ask of God in our prayers. He does not ask for human and temporal favors for them, because he had not come into this world to procure such benefits for us. He knew that it was the Eternal Father who had given him his disciples, that they belonged to him,²⁶⁴ and that the Father had destined them to preach his gospel²⁶⁵ and to work for the salvation of souls. He realized, therefore, that he should pray to his Father to give them only those things which might contribute to the end for which he had called them.

That was why in this prayer Jesus Christ asked his Eternal Father for three things in particular: first, to keep them from sin, by the words, keep them from evil.²⁶⁶ This is what you must first of all ask of God until you have obtained it. You should have such a horror for anything that even comes close to being sinful that, as Saint Paul urges, you will keep away from anything having the shadow or the appearance of sin.²⁶⁷ Since this is a benefit you cannot procure for yourself, it is essential that you constantly ask God's help to get it.

Beg him, therefore, most earnestly that nothing may make you displeasing in his sight, since you are obliged to inspire his love in the hearts of those whom you instruct. Is this how you relate to them? Is this what you ask of God in the prayers you offer to him?

39.2 Second Point

The second thing in this prayer that Jesus Christ asks of his Eternal Father for his holy apostles is that he sanctify them in truth;²⁶⁸ in other words, he does not want them to be holy with a merely external justice, like that required under the Old Law. He wants their hearts to be purified and sanctified by grace and by a sharing in the divine holiness which is in Jesus Christ. They need to participate in this if they are to contribute to the sanctification of others. He adds that this is why he is offering himself to the Father and that he wishes to be made holy himself²⁶⁹ by the death which he is about to undergo on the cross.

Because in your state of life you are called to procure the sanctification of your pupils, you should be holy yourself in no ordinary degree, for you must communicate this holiness to them both by your good example and by the words of salvation which you must address to them every day. Interior application to prayer, love for your spiritual exercises, fidelity in performing them well and in carrying out all the other community practices will especially help you to acquire this holiness and the perfection that God wishes you to have. Beg him for it daily with great earnestness. Have this so much at heart that you never cease praying for it until you have obtained it.

39.3 Third Point

The third favor which Jesus Christ asked of his Eternal Father for his holy apostles in the prayer we read in today's Gospel is great union among themselves. He desires that this union be so close and stable that it resemble the union among the three Divine Persons.²⁷⁰ It will not be exactly the same, because the three Divine Persons have only one essence, but the union among the apostles would participate in the union of the Trinity in such a way that their union of mind and heart, desired by Jesus Christ for them, would have the same effect as the essential union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They would all have one and the same convictions, the same will, the same affections, the same maxims and practices.²⁷¹ This is what Saint Paul recommended to the faithful when writing to them. This is also what was so noticeable among the holy apostles and among the early disciples of Jesus Christ. As Saint Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles, they had but one heart and one mind.²⁷²

Since God has given you the grace of calling you to live in community, there is nothing that you should more earnestly ask of him than this union of mind and heart with your Brothers. Only by means of this union will you acquire that peace which ought to be all the joy of your life. Entreat the God of hearts to keep your heart and those of your Brothers one in the heart of Jesus.

264 Jn 17:6, 9
265 Jn 17:18; Mt 28:18
266 Jn 17:15
267 1 Thess 5:22
268 Jn 17:17

269 Jn 17:19
270 Jn 17:22-23
271 Phil 2:2; 1 Cor 1:10
272 Acts 4:32