

DON BOSCO CENTER OF STUDIES

An affiliate of the Salesian Pontifical University

COMMUNION IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

**A Theological Synthesis Submitted to the Faculty of Theology
Institute of Theological Formation
in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
Bachelor of Theology**

**By
Paul Michael B. Suarez, SDB**

February 2014

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INTRODUCTION

“Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”¹ People who are in search of God or even those who are in touch with God would want to know how to pray so as to have the confidence of praying, and be able to commune with God. One of the disciples, knowing that Jesus always finds time to be alone to pray, asked him to teach them to address God, thus come the prayer which is well known to almost all people in the world, the Lord’s Prayer. This Prayer which we often say is not like any other prayer since it is the Lord himself who taught it to his disciples. “Tertullian, a priest of the Christian community of Carthage in North Africa, referred to it as a *breviarium totius evangelii*, ‘an abridgement of the entire Gospel.’... Clearly, the prayer encapsulates the good news of Jesus.”²

In this theological synthesis I have chosen the theme *Communion in the light of the Lord’s Prayer*. Here, communion is the unifying theme because of my desire to deepen my prayer life in order to live in communion with God and the people whom I encounter every day. For me, there is more to this prayer than simply reciting and asking petitions for our daily needs. In this prayer, Jesus teaches us to have a relationship with God, to have the courage to call God Abba, Father. There is that endearing word which Jesus taught us to address God, so loving and intimate that Jesus introduced God who relates and is related to us. It is an invitation, a call to be closer to God, the Father.

The first chapter of this paper deals with the awareness of God as Communion in the light of the Lord’s Prayer. Here, we find the Prayer to be an expression of the Three Divine Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The catechism describes that “in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father.”³

After having an awareness of God as Communion, we are then invited to a relationship of communion. This is the bulk of the second chapter. This chapter aims to present the relationship between the Triune God and man. Here, the Church calls to God, the Father, and is united with and sanctified by the Holy Spirit to belong to the Kingdom of God, the fullness of communion.

The last chapter features our response from this relationship we experience with God. Having a grasp of our relationship with the Holy Trinity, our communion should move us to a response of love. Here, we find Mary, the Mother of our Lord, as an example par excellence who lives in communion with God and neighbor. With Jesus’ new commandment of love, we imitate Our Lady in being a true disciple of Christ. This following of Christ leads us back to God in worship and praise in the Eucharist, “the source and summit of the Christian life.”⁴

¹ Luke 11: 1 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

² Albert Haase, O.F.M., *Living the Lord’s Prayer, The Way of the Disciple* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 13-14.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), no. 2766.

⁴ *Lumen Gentium* (LG), no. 11.

CHAPTER I

THE LORD'S PRAYER LEADS US TO AN AWARENESS OF GOD AS COMMUNION

Anyone who communicates to another may be said to have a certain kind of relationship. This kind of relationship may differ in certain degrees but there is that association with another person. Prayer is a form of communication that makes one address God, invoking, adoring, praising, thanksgiving, asking for petitions or seeking pardon for the wrong deed. St. John Damascene defined prayer as the “raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”⁵ St. Thérèse of Lisieux expressed that “prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”⁶

In the New Testament, one of the disciples of Jesus, since they would normally see Jesus praying, asked him to teach them to pray. He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”⁷ One of the evangelists, St. Matthew, renders a longer account of this prayer: Jesus said,

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.⁸

Often, Jesus was seen by his disciples praying, communicating with God intimately. They have witnessed him how he prayed, and so the longing to pray like him and bond with him in prayer. There is this unique relationship between Jesus and the God to whom he addresses that moved them to request Jesus to teach them to pray, there is communion between Jesus and God that the disciples have observed. And indeed, when Jesus taught them how to pray, he asked his disciples to address God, “Father.” Thus, the Lord’s Prayer leads us to an awareness of communion between Jesus and God, whom he addresses in filial relationship and whom he reveals to us, his disciples. The catechism teaches us that “we can invoke God as ‘Father’ because he is revealed to us by his Son who became man and because his Spirit makes him known to us.”⁹

⁵ CCC, no. 2559.

⁶ Ibid, no. 2558.

⁷ Luke 11:2-4.

⁸ Matthew 6:9-13.

⁹ CCC, no. 2780.

Just like the disciples of Jesus, we are in need of guidance on how to pray to God. Jesus, the mediator between God and man, is himself both God and man and so, he knows how to bring us to communion with the Divine. He knows who the Father is and knows who man is, as he himself shares our humanity. Through Jesus, the Son of God, we come to an awareness of God, in Three Divine Persons.

1. The Lord's Prayer, a Trinitarian Prayer

Looking at the history of our Christian faith, we see that Christianity has its Jewish roots. "The major tenets of Jewish faith are in fact the building blocks for the Christian faith. The Jewish faith has as its foundation a single belief: there is but One God."¹⁰ The First Commandment states that: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."¹¹ We find Jesus born in this tradition of monotheism set in the Jewish culture. However, Jesus reveals to us that "while there is but one God, in this one God there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."¹² Jesus revealed God as Father by revealing himself as the Son of the Father. Jesus said to his disciples: "The works I do in my Father's name testify to me... The Father and I are one."¹³ The loving bond between the Father and the Son paved the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and thus expresses the unity of the Holy Trinity. In the Gospel account of St. Matthew, Jesus gives his final instruction to his disciples, sending them to a mission which the early Christians used as the baptismal formula, a Trinitarian formula. Jesus said "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

We read from the catechism that:

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith." The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin."¹⁵

¹⁰ Ian Knox, C.S.Sp., *Theology for Teachers* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2011), 41.

¹¹ Exodus 20:2-3.

¹² Knox, 41.

¹³ John 10: 25, 30.

¹⁴ Matthew 28:19.

¹⁵ CCC, no. 234.

When Jesus taught us how to pray, he also revealed to us who God is. Instructing his disciples to address God as Father, we learn that God is Father. The prayer also expresses an intimate filial relationship that is present between the Father and the Son. Whenever we utter the Lord's Prayer, we pray to God, the Holy Trinity, for they are one and cannot be divided, yet each Person is distinct from the other. This is the mystery of our faith. "The prayer itself is clearly Trinitarian. It is the prayer of the Son, to the Father, in the Spirit sent into our hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father!'"¹⁶

1.1. God as Three Divine Persons

Whenever Trinity Sunday comes, preachers try their very best to explain what it is all about. Different props and analogies are used so that the faithful may have even just a tinge of understanding what the Trinity is. St. Patrick made use of the shamrock, preaching to the Irish neophytes having an image of one leaf yet three-pronged or the image of water having one chemical substance but exists in three different states: solid, liquid and gas.¹⁷ Another is the famous 3-in-1 instant coffee which consists of three main ingredients but form a single drink. We hear of the story of St. Augustine and his dream of a boy placing water from the sea in a hole dug in the sand. Not making sense of what the boy was doing, St. Augustine inquired of the boy's actions concluding it to be nonsense only to be told of the same thing when he was trying very hard to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

In the end, preachers conclude, the Holy Trinity, One God, three divine persons, is a mystery. Many times, though we do not understand completely, we profess our faith in this mystery whenever we proclaim the Creed or make the sign of the cross. Time and again we are given an explanation of what it is and this we live and put to faith.

Our knowledge of God as the Holy Trinity did not come at once. It was revealed to us in the "fullness of time." In the Scriptures, God is known to be the creator of all that is. God is known to be the God of fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the book of Exodus, God had revealed to Moses the sacred name "I am who am" at the burning bush and led the people of Israel to the Promised Land. In the Scriptures, we read how the people of Israel describe God in their journey. It is also in the Old Testament text that we read of 'Wisdom' personified as a daughter or feminine companion of God the Most High. "In Prov. 8 in the course of a long speech Wisdom describes how she assisted at the creation of the world (vv. 22-31). In Sir. 24, in another speech which she begins by stating that she 'came forth from the mouth of the Most High,' she describes how she took up her abode in Israel and was established in Zion, and praises herself in very glowing terms."¹⁸ We also find the expressions like 'the spirit of the Lord,' 'the spirit of God,' and 'my spirit' in the Old Testament. "The spirit of the Lord is not of course a

¹⁶ *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (CFC), no. 2116.

¹⁷ Cf. Knox, 42.

¹⁸ Edmund Hill, *The Mystery of the Trinity* (London: Cassel Ltd., 1985), 25.

distinct entity, any more than the word of the Lord or the divine wisdom. It may be called, not inaccurately, a divine energy or force.”¹⁹ Little by little, the expressions of the people on God developed, as if the hidden aspect of God is revealed in time. And it was in the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, that the relationship of the Holy Trinity was fully revealed.

The different Councils of the Church in the past centuries state to us the dogma of the Holy Trinity as summarized by the catechism:

The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the ‘consubstantial Trinity.’ The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: “The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God.”²⁰

The divine persons are really distinct from one another. “God is one but not solitary.” “Father,” “Son,” “Holy Spirit” are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: “He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son.” They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” The divine Unity is Triune.²¹

God as Three Divine Persons is taken with faith, for we cannot explain it with our limited reasoning and we could not have known it without God revealing it to us. “We must think of the persons of the Trinity as distinct from one another but in a relationship with one another... Thus, the Blessed Trinity – God – is in fact a community of persons.”²²

1.2. God as Communion of Persons

Among others, one of the prayers taught to us in catechesis is the Lord’s Prayer and together with this is the explanation of our relationship with God. God is our Father and therefore we are his children. There is an emphasis of our filial relationship with God the Father as presented to us by his Son, Jesus Christ. It is because of the relationship of the three divine persons with each other that we come to experience a communion with God.

¹⁹ Hill, 25.

²⁰ CCC, no. 253.

²¹ CCC, no. 254.

²² Knox, 42.

The Holy Trinity, One God in three divine persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is one of the first mysteries of the faith taught to us as children. This is the “central mystery of Christian faith and life.”²³ “This mystery alerted us to the relational quality of divinity. The Father loves the Son; the Son loves the Father; and their very relationship is bonded together by the Holy Spirit. The very essence of our God is loving relationships.”²⁴ There is the communion of the divine persons of God centered in love because “God is love.”²⁵ The Council of Toledo explains that “in the relative names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance.”²⁶ The Council of Florence gives its statement saying that “on account of this unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.”²⁷

Whenever we pray the Lord’s Prayer, though we personally address God the Father, it does not mean that we divide the Godhead, since the Father is its “source and origin of the whole divinity,”²⁸ but rather we confess that the Son is eternally begotten by him and the Holy Spirit proceeds from him. We are not confusing the persons, for we confess that our communion is with the Father and his Son, in their one Holy Spirit. When we pray to God the Father, we give adoration and glory together with the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁹ “Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.”³⁰

The Fathers of the Church distinguish between the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity as Theology and all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life as Economy.³¹ Theology or Immanent Trinity “means the mystery of the Trinity considered in itself, without reference to creatures.”³² The Holy Trinity in itself as communion of Persons is love. God is love. Moved exclusively by his love, God created “all things in order to manifest his glory and make his creatures share

²³ CCC, no. 234.

²⁴ Haase, 38.

²⁵ 1 John 4:8.

²⁶ Council of Toledo XI (675), DS 528.

²⁷ Council of Florence (1442), DS 1331.

²⁸ CCC, no. 245.

²⁹ Cf. Ibid., no. 2789.

³⁰ Ibid., no. 259.

³¹ Cf. Ibid., no. 236.

³² Hill, 46.

in his happiness. He is all-perfect and he is in need of nothing. He did not have to create in order to obtain some perfection he did not yet possess.”³³ This act of creating all things flows from the loving relationship of God within the three divine Persons, thus extending this relationship of communion to his creation. It is an act of creativity. Just as an inspired artist produces his masterpiece to express his love so it is with God who is love.

2. Communion of God Extended in Creation

Going through some texts on creation, I stumbled upon an idea from Albert Einstein, who seemed to be musing on creation, whereupon he asked himself whether God had any choice in the creation of the world. As mentioned earlier, God is all-perfect and in need of nothing. He did not create to obtain some perfection. With this, he created with complete freedom. “We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God’s free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness.”³⁴

The Holy Trinity is overflowing with love and communion that the divine persons have chosen to extend this goodness through creation.

2.1. Creation, the Work of God

A person who walks in a gallery full of magnificent paintings of works of art and enjoys what he sees would definitely enjoy the beautiful and captivating landscapes in different parts of the world or any creation of God. There is beauty and wisdom in creation that makes one wonder of its source and origin. In the Sacred Scriptures we find expressions of great admiration for the works of God which until now we may see in our time. “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”³⁵ The psalmist expressed his awe for the various works done by God which shows the great wisdom of the Creator.

The Holy Trinity is a communion of three Persons, but there is only one God, one sole divine nature. Thus, there is only one principle of operations. All the operations *ad extra* of God – the operations whose object is outside of him (not the relations between the Persons) – proceed from this one nature and are common to the three divine Persons. Creation is one of these *ad extra* operations and is, therefore, common to the whole Trinity.³⁶ The Catechism for Filipino Catholics expressed thus:

³³ *Faith Seeking Understanding*, vol. 1, ed. Charles Belmonte (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: Studium Theologiae Foundation Inc., 2006), 205.

³⁴ CCC, no. 295.

³⁵ Psalm 104:24.

³⁶ Cf. Knox, 204-205.

Christian Faith teaches that all three Divine Persons act together as ONE GOD in creating, redeeming and sanctifying. Here we affirm God the Father creates through His Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul wrote: “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come, and for whom we live; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom everything was made and through whom we live,” and the Holy Spirit who “gives life.”³⁷

Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity. St. Irenaeus explains that “There exists but one God... he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He made all things by himself, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom,” “by the Son and the Spirit” who, so to speak are “his hands.”³⁸

But why would God want to choose to create the world? With God who is all-perfection and needs nothing to add to his perfection, why create? Scripture and Tradition teaches that “the world was created for the glory of God.”³⁹ St. Bonaventure gives us an explanation to this saying that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it.”⁴⁰ The reason is because of his love and goodness. The First Vatican Council explains further:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and almighty power, not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel from the beginning of time made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal.⁴¹

“Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand.”⁴² It is in the realization of the communication of his love and goodness that the glory of God consists. According to the purpose of his will, God made us to be his children through Jesus Christ, “to the praise of his glorious grace.” The ultimate purpose of creation is that God “who is the creator of all things may at last become ‘all in all,’ thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our happiness.”⁴³ Right from the very beginning, God wanted us to be with him, to be in communion with him in great joy.

2.2. Man, as God’s expression of overflowing communion

³⁷ *CFC*, no. 318.

³⁸ *CCC*, no. 292.

³⁹ *Dei Filius*, DS 3025.

⁴⁰ *CCC*, no. 293.

⁴¹ *Dei Filius*, 1, DS 3002.

⁴² *CCC*, no. 293.

⁴³ *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 2.

A person who is overwhelmed with love and joy cannot but share these feelings to another person and would want to express this great happiness in one form or another. If we apply this process of reasoning to God, multiplying it to infinity, probably we could say that God's love and goodness overflow that it moved the three Divine Persons to say: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."⁴⁴ There is the great desire to share the unity of God, the love of God to his creation. We read from a passage from the book of Genesis the use of the "majestic plural" which gives us traces of the Trinitarian mystery in the Old Testament. St. Augustine wrote: "*Novum in Vetere latet et in Novo Vetus patet.*" Taking the explanation from the document *Dei Verbum*: "God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be manifest in the New."⁴⁵ In the creation of the world and here specifically, in the creation of man, God acted in communion. This work is an expression of the unity and relationship of God within the divine persons wanting to share this relationship.

"Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures."⁴⁶ God created man in a special manner; man is created in the image and likeness of God and thus constitutes his dignity giving him a definitive purpose and function, which is to be stewards of God's creation, a sign of God's sovereignty, and be God's representative over the world and the animals. Also, just as God is in a relationship within the Holy Trinity, man is created to be in a relationship, in friendship, in communion with God, to totally depend on him and called to dialogue with him.

Reading from the Sacred Scriptures, we learn that man was created in the image and likeness of God, something which makes man distinct from other material creatures, a dignity that was given to man. Being in the image and likeness of God, man comes to possess a rational soul and spiritual powers of intellect and will and thus enjoys the dignity of a person. There is the capacity in man of self-knowledge and understanding. There is in man the capacity to freely make a choice. Man is called to respond in faith and love to be in communion with God and makes use of these human capacities to answer this call.

In the beginning, God and man was in perfect communion, there was harmony until man was put to test with his freedom and have fallen into sin. When man was tempted by the devil seducing him that he will become like God, he abused his freedom and disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. Thus, man's sin consists in disobedience. All subsequent sins would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

⁴⁴ Genesis 1:26.

⁴⁵ *Dei Verbum*, no. 16.

⁴⁶ *CCC*, no. 343.

The fall of Adam brings to all mankind the consequences of sin. St. Paul expresses in his letter to the Romans: “Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.”⁴⁷ But St. Paul contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. “For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”⁴⁸ Though man has sinned, this did not stop God to have communion with man. His plan of salvation is to bring back all of us in union with him once more and this is done through his Son, Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus Christ brings us back to Communion

We hear ministers, preachers and catechists teaching people of our reason of living: the life of man is to know, to love, to serve and to be with God in eternity. We read from the catechism of how God wants us to be drawn close to him:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.⁴⁹

When man had fallen to sin, God did not stop from loving him; rather He prepared the way for the coming of his Son, to bring us salvation that we may once again be with him, to be in communion with the Father. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”⁵⁰

Jesus Christ brings us back in communion with God the Father just as he planned from the very beginning. God still draws us to him so as to share in his blessed life. And the mystery of the Incarnation--of God becoming man--is part of God's great plan for us all to be reconciled with him in eternity.

3.1. The Incarnate Son of the Father

⁴⁷ Romans 5:12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5:19.

⁴⁹ CCC, no. 1.

⁵⁰ John 3:16.

And the angel said to Mary in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”⁵¹ The Annunciation event presents us the work of the Holy Trinity and we proclaim our faith in the coming of the Son of God as stated in the Nicene Creed, “for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” The Son of God became man in order to save us by reconciling us with God. God becoming man is for us to know God's love and to be our model and for us to be in communion with him sharing in his divinity.

One of the best ways to express one's love and concern to another is to make one's presence felt. For people who are close to us, we try our very best to be present for them. The same may be said of God, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”⁵² God truly loves us and cares for us that he himself came down from heaven born in human flesh, to be present for us. Jesus, the Son of God, is truly human. This does not mean that Jesus is part man and part God. “He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man.”⁵³ There were many heresies that came up with regard to the humanity and divinity of Christ raising confusion to the people; this led for ecumenical councils to correct these heresies.

The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son “come in the flesh.” But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is “begotten, not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father,” and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God “came to be from things that were not” and that he was “from another substance” than that of the Father.⁵⁴

St. Augustine said: “Christ was made sharer of our mortality, that we might also be partakers in His divinity.”⁵⁵ When Jesus Christ became man, it is to reconcile us back to God. Man have fallen into sin by disobeying God and for us to be reconciled, there is a need to break this disobedience, but it cannot be done by any man who may fall again, rather it should be one who is from God carrying our humanity with it. With the incarnation, human flesh became a tabernacle and dwelling place for the ineffable divine

⁵¹ Luke 1:35.

⁵² John 1:14.

⁵³ CCC, no. 464.

⁵⁴ Ibid., no. 465.

⁵⁵ Psalm CXVII, Sermon XIX, 6, as cited in Haase, 66.

Word of God, this then affirms the goodness and the sanctity of human flesh.⁵⁶ We hear from St. Paul, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?”⁵⁷ With the incarnation of Christ, we may become partakers of God’s divinity so as to be worthy of eternal life with Him. We are in need of Christ since the fallen human race cannot save himself and this is the work of redemption.

3.2. The Work of Redemption

Redemption is God’s activity in delivering us from the bondage of sin and evil. We know of the Exodus event, the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt redeemed by God. There is the deliverance from the Babylonian Exile revealing God’s loving fidelity. And finally through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Christ delivered us from the power of sin and evil.⁵⁸ The name of Jesus in Hebrew means “God saves.” This is the name given in the Annunciation signifying the identity and mission of Jesus. “Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, “will save his people from their sins.” In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.”⁵⁹

There is the necessity of redemption since man cannot save himself from his sins. Only God can restore the supernatural order that was lost through sin. “The Magisterium of the Church teaches that one cannot redeem oneself through one’s own power. God’s help is necessary for redemption.”⁶⁰ The Council of Trent condemned the heretics who affirmed the contrary, saying, “If anyone says that without divine grace through Jesus Christ man can be justified before God by his own works, whether they were done by his natural powers or by the light of the teaching of the [Mosaic] Law, let him be anathema.”⁶¹ It is in the redemption of God through his Son, that man is saved and through Jesus Christ that God’s love is revealed. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”⁶²

Having Christ come down from heaven and die on the cross is not the whole of redemption. His whole life is a “mystery of redemption”⁶³ and redemption comes to us

⁵⁶ Cf. Haase, 66.

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:19.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gerald O’ Collins, S.J. and Edward Farrugia, S.J., *A Concise Dictionary of Theology, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2010), 221-222.

⁵⁹ CCC, no. 430.

⁶⁰ Belmonte, 294.

⁶¹ Council of Trent (1547), DS 1551.

⁶² John 3: 16.

⁶³ CCC, no. 517.

above all through the blood of his cross.⁶⁴ The New Testament scriptures show us how the life of Christ became redemption for all mankind:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;
- in his word which purifies its hearers;
- in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”;
- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.⁶⁵

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the disciples had been with him for quite some time now and had seen how Jesus lived his life with other people whom he met. The words of redemption may have passed through their ears but were not yet with full understanding. It was after the resurrection, with the work of the Holy Spirit, that they came to realize the redemption of God for man, of what it means for us all. “In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is “the perfect man,” who invites us to become his disciples and follow him.”⁶⁶ “By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.”⁶⁷ We are called to be one with Christ forming one Body continuing with the examples he has given us. With the prayer Jesus taught us, we are invited to live this prayer as disciples of Christ. We are to live in communion with God the Father, whom Jesus revealed and allow the Holy Spirit to move us to a relationship of love.

⁶⁴ Cf. Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

⁶⁵ CCC, no. 517.

⁶⁶ Ibid., no. 520.

⁶⁷ *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), no. 22.

CHAPTER II

GOD AS COMMUNION, INVITES US TO A RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNION

We have heard of the saying “No man is an island.” This has already been a cliché whenever we speak of things related to the society or community life. I believe that since man is created in the image and likeness of God, we come to inherit God’s communal aspect. Since God is communion, man therefore would have in him the longing to be in communion with God and many times we are invited to a relationship of communion with another. This community living may vary depending on the situation of a person. Here is a story told with a lesson on community living:

The abbot of a large monastery was asked by some visitors how so many monks of such different origins and different talents and personalities could live and work so harmoniously under one roof. He thought it over for a moment and then explained, “We are like a bicycle wheel. It has a rim, spokes and a hub in the middle. The rim is like the monastic wall around us. But that only keeps us together externally. Now from the rim a whole series of spokes run toward the middle of the wheel where the hub is. The hub holds the spokes together. We members of the community are those spokes. The hub is Jesus Christ. The rim of the wheel is just our monastery.” When the visitor nodded his approval, the abbot went on, “You will notice on a bicycle wheel that the nearer the spokes get to the hub, the nearer they come to one another. It is just like that in a community which has Christ as its center and hub.” It is the same way in life: the more we make Christ the center of our lives, the nearer we grow to one another.⁶⁸

When Jesus Christ taught his disciples how to pray, he instructed them to call God, “Our Father.” We are taught to live in a community having God as our Father, and having each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, as children of God. There is the communal aspect of praying to God. It is Christ, who taught us how to pray that moves us to communion, and whenever we grow in the following of Christ, calling to God our Father, we nurture our relationship with each other. “The more we make Christ the center of our lives, the nearer we grow to one another.”⁶⁹

1. The Church, calling God “Our Father”

The word Church takes its root from the Greek word *ecclesia*, ordinarily translated by assembly of the people, convocation of people, or a calling out of. This thus became the “proper designation of the new communion that grew out of Jesus’

⁶⁸ Frank Mihalic, SVD., *The Next 500 Stories* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 1993), 171.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

activity.”⁷⁰ The Church means a people who believe in Jesus, commemorating his passion, death and resurrection. They are a people who come together to profess their faith, to worship and celebrate together, thus indicating a sense of community, of togetherness.⁷¹ Taking from the catechism, the Church’s quintessential prayer is the Lord’s Prayer where the first communities of Christians prayed the Lord’s Prayer three times a day and later were integrated in the praying of the Divine Office and in the sacraments of initiation.⁷² In this prayer, we express our relationship with God as “Our Father.” The use of the word “our” would indicate more than one person calling God the Father, forming a communion of persons. “God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the ‘convocation’ of men in Christ, and this convocation is the Church.”⁷³ It is that experience of Christ in a community of the divine persons that we come to live a life in communion with others.

The dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, starts with the need to proclaim Christ and his Gospel to every creature. The Church, with Christ as the light of humanity shining out visibly from her, set forth her purpose for the benefit of the faithful and of the whole world.⁷⁴ The constitution continues saying:

[T]he Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her king.⁷⁵

It is Christ who instituted the Church. “The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures.”⁷⁶ When we utter the words “Our Father,” though it may be done individually, we do it in union with the people of Christ. Being a member of the Church, we pray to God with the same intention and desire in our hearts to be united in glory in his kingdom.

⁷⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion, Understanding the Church Today* (USA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 30.

⁷¹ Cf. Knox, 167.

⁷² Cf. CCC, no. 2776.

⁷³ Ibid., no. 760.

⁷⁴ Cf. LG, no. 1.

⁷⁵ LG, no. 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

1.1. The Church as the Universal sacrament of Salvation

Whenever I give a talk on the sacrament of baptism, what we call pre-baptism seminar, I try to make the people understand, what a sacrament is. I thus give them the definition: A sacrament is “a visible sign, instituted by Christ that reveals and communicates grace.”⁷⁷ It is an external sign of an interior grace, the mystical presence and power of God. A sacrament effects, or brings about, what it signifies. It makes for us realize what is not sensible by our human senses. Considering the definition given, we then have Jesus Christ as the primordial sacrament, “for in him God is revealed in a tangible and sense-perceptible way.”⁷⁸ We read from the Gospel of John when Jesus said: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”⁷⁹ It is through Jesus Christ, who became man and reveals to us his Father that we come to know God. It is in the same respect that we have the Church as sacrament. “Through the church, Jesus is made actively present in the world; the church continues Jesus’ ministry to the world. Therefore, the church is a tangible, sense-perceptible sign of Jesus’ presence to the world. Not only is it a sign, but it is an efficacious sign which actually accomplishes what it signifies (i.e. the presence of God in the world); hence it is well be called a sacrament.”⁸⁰ We then come to have an experience of Jesus present in the work and ministry of the Church. We encounter Jesus in the real way in this world particularly through the participation in the sacraments.

We read from *Lumen Gentium* that the universal Church is seen to be “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁸¹ We find in the same constitution that the Church which is presented in its first chapter “comes from the Trinity, is fashioned to the image of the Trinity, and journeys towards a Trinitarian fulfillment of history.”⁸² It thus presents to us the relationship of the Church with the Holy Trinity and presents the Church as sacrament, making visible the Trinitarian communion. “The Church in its visible and historical form, is the sacrament, that is the sign and chosen instrument, of the divine plan of unity which stretches from creation to the parousia. In other words, the Church is the historical participation in the Trinitarian unity.”⁸³

“The Church in Christ is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.”⁸⁴ The catechism explains that

⁷⁷ O’ Collins and Farrugia, 231.

⁷⁸ Knox, 177.

⁷⁹ John 14:9.

⁸⁰ Knox, 177.

⁸¹ *LG*, no. 4.

⁸² Bruno Forte, *The Church, Icon of the Trinity, An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Philippines: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 29.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁴ *LG*, no. 5.

“the Church’s first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of men with God. Because men’s communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the unity of the human race...; at the same time, the Church is the “sign and instrument” of the full realization of the unity yet to come.”⁸⁵ To define the Church as sacrament is to closely link it with Christ in line with the economy of salvation. Just as Jesus Christ is the Primordial Sacrament, who became man to bestow grace, the Church too is a sacrament of salvation. “Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth, it is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all; as the light of the world and the salt of the earth it is sent forth into the whole world.”⁸⁶ The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation set up by Christ bringing all men to himself.⁸⁷

1.2. The Church as One

After the approval of the New English Translation of the Roman Missal in Rome, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) started to implement the use of this new English translation last December 2012. With this implementation was the use of the Nicene Creed in the profession of faith. We have come to know of this creed from the time of the Council of Constantinople in 381 and have professed to believe in the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” These are the four marks or characteristics of the Church of Christ which indicate the essential features of the Church and its mission. In professing this Creed, we also profess with faith these marks of the Church.

Let me then focus on the first mark or characteristic of the Church in line with communion, though it does not mean that the other marks are not related to it. Thomas Rausch gives a description of how the Church is one:

From the beginning the Church was one, for the Church of the New Testament was a communion of Churches. The word *koinonia*, generally translated as “communion” or “fellowship,” was first used by Paul. It refers to a relationship of communion between believers based on sharing certain things in common (*koinon*). The basis of this communion is primarily spiritual; it comes from sharing a common life in the Spirit given in baptism (1 Cor 12:13) and particularly from sharing in the Eucharist. The members of the Church are “one body” because they have a participation or communion (*koinonia*) in the body and blood of Christ.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CCC, no. 775.

⁸⁶ LG, no. 9.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid., no. 48.

⁸⁸ Thomas Rausch, *Catholics in the Third Millennium, Second Edition* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2003), 54.

As we have seen earlier, the Church is an assembly or a gathering of people united in the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the early Christian communities, people would gather in a particular place to celebrate a table fellowship commemorating the words and actions of Christ. This is being one, in communion with God the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Also, in the times of St. Paul, the different communities, or churches he organized, would contribute financially to the mother Church of Jerusalem because of their desire to maintain communion. The churches thus have unity. The Church is actually moved to unity because of her origin and source of unity.⁸⁹ This source is the unity of the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ It is also one because of its founder, Jesus Christ, for “the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the Cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body.”⁹¹ It is in this one source that we are one, in communion, in unity. The Church cannot do away with God or with Christ for she is the Body of Christ. This one and only Church of Christ is kept in unity – undivided – “by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government and communion.”⁹²

It is the desire of Jesus Christ for his disciples to be united as he earnestly prays to God the Father this intention: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”⁹³ This unity subsists in the Church and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time. It is the Holy Spirit that “leads the company of believers to “form a community,” to be the Church. After Peter's first proclamation on the day of Pentecost and the conversions that followed, the first community takes shape (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35).”⁹⁴

2. The Holy Spirit that Unites and Sanctifies

We have been taught about God as three Divine Persons and most of the time we hear of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. When we pray to the Father, we address God the Father through his Son guided by the Holy Spirit, a Trinitarian prayer. When I entered the seminary, this consciousness of the guidance of the Holy Spirit was kindled in me, especially when we come together for meditation in the morning. We first ask the Holy Spirit to guide, direct and edify us in our prayers and after some time, some of my fellow seminarians and I myself come to a deep encounter with God (asleep, but probably the work of another spirit). Throughout the day we invoke the Holy Spirit to be

⁸⁹ Cf. *CCC*, no. 813.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), no. 2.

⁹¹ *GS*, no. 78.

⁹² *LG*, no. 14.

⁹³ John 17:21.

⁹⁴ *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), no. 26.

with us always and enlighten us in our activities. At times we sing a prayer: “*Come, Holy Spirit, I need you. Come, Holy Spirit, I pray. Come with your strength and your power. Come, in your own special way.*” The Holy Spirit, the breath of life, the gift of God was sent to us to unite, sanctify and give us the strength to follow Christ’s examples in our lives. Hopefully, we heed the urgings of the Holy Spirit always aware of his abiding presence.

Referring to the Dictionary of Theology, it is explained that the Holy Spirit is:

The third person of the Trinity, adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son as one in nature and equal in personal dignity with the Father and the Son. The Council of Braga (675) added to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed that the Spirit proceeded from the Father “and the Son” (or *Filioque*).... The work of sanctification, common to all three persons, is appropriated⁹⁵ to the Spirit, because it entails the self-gift of the Spirit (Jn 20:22; Rom 5:5). Both St. Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296-373) and St. Cyril of Alexandria (d.444) argued for the divinity of the Spirit precisely because the Spirit makes us similar to God by divinizing or sanctifying us. The divinity of the Spirit was proclaimed at the First Council of Constantinople in 381.⁹⁶

2.1. The Spirit of Adoption, by which we Cry “Abba! Father!”

The Holy Spirit was revealed to us by the Son, Jesus Christ, after he has completed the will of the Father, but it does not mean that the Holy Spirit was not present before that. Fr. Felipe Gomez, S.J. commented on the term “spirit” found in the Old Testament text on the matter:

In Hebrew “spirit” is *ruah*, translated in Greek (the so-called Septuagint) as *pneuma*. The Masoretic Text has 389 instances of “spirit” and the LXX only 277. But the expression “Holy Spirit” appears only three times: Ps 51:13 “Don’t take from me your Holy Spirit”; Is 63:10, 11: “They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit... Where is he who put his Holy Spirit in their midst?”⁹⁷

But he explains that the use of the term “spirit” may vary because the names do not always mean “God’s spirit.” The “spirit” when used without adjectives is usually

⁹⁵ Appropriation (Lat. “to make one’s own). Assigning a divine action or attribute, which is actually common to all three persons of the Trinity, to only one of them. Thus creation is appropriated to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. In fact, all opera ad extra (Lat. “outward actions”) are common to the three persons, (O’ Collins and Farrugia, 18).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 109.

⁹⁷ Felipe Gomez, S.J., *The Holy Spirit in Theology and Spirituality* (Philippines: St. Pauls Publications, 2010), 12.

understood as wind. “There are 18 cases of “Spirit of God” and 27 “Spirit of the Lord” (Yahweh). Other expressions are clearly anthropological, such as spirit of suspicion, spirit of wisdom, spirit of grace and prayer.”⁹⁸

In the New Testament, the use of the term *pneuma* has a similar meaning to the Hebrew *ruah*, which is wind, breath or spirit. The use of the expression *hagion pneuma*, Holy Spirit, appears 101 times and has a real theological meaning.⁹⁹ “As compared with the Old Testament, *pneuma* has acquired a solid theological meaning, or better, a Christian sense.... The revelation of the Holy Spirit took place gradually, with the experience of the disciples and of the Church and the sharpening of the concepts.”¹⁰⁰ From this revelation, we hear St. Paul speak of the “spirit of adoption” saying to the community of Christians in Rome: “You have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”¹⁰¹

The gift of calling God, “Abba! Father!” is always through the Holy Spirit. Though we are taught to call God Father, it is with the Holy Spirit that we dare to say “Our Father.” We find in the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians that “God has sent the Holy Spirit in our hearts:”

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”¹⁰²

Being children of God, we are led by the Holy Spirit to our sanctification and the sanctification of the Church living in communion. The Second Vatican Council expresses the role of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesial communion, that: “The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might continually sanctify the Church.”¹⁰³ It continues to say that:

The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). In them he prays and bears witness to their adoptive sonship (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom. 8:15-16 and 26). Guiding the Church in the way of all truth (cf. Jn. 16:13) and unifying her in communion and

⁹⁸ Cf. Gomez, 12.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Romans 8:15-16.

¹⁰² Galatians 4: 4-6.

¹⁰³ *LG*, no. 4.

in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her; and he adorns her with his fruits (cf. Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4; Gal. 5:22). By the power of the Gospel he permits the Church to keep the freshness of the youth. Constantly he renews and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse. For the Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord: "Come!"¹⁰⁴

It is the Holy Spirit that forms and animates the Church leading its members to God the Father as revealed by Jesus, his Son. As members of the Church, we are adopted sons and daughters and so we have the courage to call God "Father," in union with the Son and receive the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into us.¹⁰⁵

2.2. The Holy Spirit moving us to Holiness

Whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer, we adore God praying "hallowed be your name." "We hallow the Father's Name not only with the Son, but through the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶ When we say "to hallow" it is to be understood "not primarily in its causative sense (only God hallows, makes holy), but above all in an evaluative sense: to recognize as holy, to treat in a holy way. And so, in adoration, this invocation is sometimes understood as praise and thanksgiving."¹⁰⁷ But in praying that the Father's name be holy, we also challenge ourselves to be holy. "This petition also carries daunting challenges for human beings. It makes drastic demands on those who say these words in prayer. God's name is 'hallowed' by those whose lives, through divine grace, the power of sin have been overcome. We are praying for a change in ourselves, not in God."¹⁰⁸ Praying that the name of God the Father be made holy draws us into his plan of loving kindness for the fullness of time, that we might "be holy and blameless before him in love."¹⁰⁹ This also reminds us of the central injunction in the Book of Leviticus: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."¹¹⁰

One of the marks of the Church is holiness. This does not mean that the members of the Church have no sins, but rather the Church is holy "because it is the locus of God's abiding presence."¹¹¹ Just as the ground of the burning bush is holy because of God's

¹⁰⁴ *LG*, no. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *CCC*, no. 1997.

¹⁰⁶ *CFC*, no. 2147.

¹⁰⁷ *CCC*, no. 2807.

¹⁰⁸ O' Collins, S.J., *The Lord's Prayer* (India: St. Pauls Publications, 2006), 75.

¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 1:4.

¹¹⁰ Leviticus 19:2.

¹¹¹ Rausch, 59.

presence, so is the Church is holy because of his presence. The council acknowledges that the holiness of the Church is not perfect and it is “in need of purification.”¹¹² “Holiness is obviously the specific effect of the Holy Spirit. This holiness of the Church is, in the first place, not a quality of her members but endowment of the Church as Body of Christ. It consists of the means of sanctification in her, such as the Word of God, the Sacraments, the mission Christ entrusted to her.”¹¹³ *Lumen Gentium* explains thus:

The Church, whose mystery is set forth by this sacred Council, is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as “alone holy,” loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her (cf. Eph.5:25-26); he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. Therefore all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness, according to the apostle’s saying: ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Th. 4:3; cf. Eph. 1:4).¹¹⁴

It is with the Holy Spirit that we strive to be holy as members of the Church. The Holy Spirit was sent “in order that he might continually sanctify the Church.... He is the Spirit of life, the fountain of water springing up to eternal life.... The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. In them he prays and bears witness to their adoptive sonship.”¹¹⁵

Up until now, the Holy Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Blessed Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* “recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the “seeds of the Word,” to be found in human initiatives including religious ones and in mankind’s efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself.”¹¹⁶ He further narrates that:

The Spirit offers the human race “the light and strength to respond to its highest calling”; through the Spirit, “mankind attains in faith to the contemplation and savoring of the mystery of God’s design”; indeed, “we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God.” The Church “is aware that humanity is being continually stirred by the Spirit of God... and that “people will always...want to know what meaning to give their life, their activity and their death.” The Spirit, therefore, is at the very source of man’s existential and religious questioning, a questioning which

¹¹² *LG*, no. 8.

¹¹³ Gomez, 119.

¹¹⁴ *LG*, no. 39.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 4.

¹¹⁶ *RM*, no. 28.

is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of his being.¹¹⁷

“In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church.”¹¹⁸ It is the Holy Spirit that unites us to the Triune God and to the Church stirring in us that desire that has always been there deep inside of us. And it is in genuine prayer that moves us to communion leading us to act upon our prayer to sacrifice and love of others, a way to holiness.

The Holy Spirit is indeed at the very heart of each person, and moves everyone to holiness. The presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in each one does not only affect the individual but also the society and history, people, cultures and religions.¹¹⁹ It is also the Holy Spirit that bestows upon the Church and its members varied gifts for the mission of proclaiming and establishing the Kingdom of Christ and of God.¹²⁰ The Church longs for the full coming of the Kingdom and its full communion with God and will only receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven at the time of Christ’s glorious return.¹²¹ The Trinity is the final goal of the Church, its origin and source. “Born of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, the ecclesial communion should return through the Son, in the Spirit, to the Father, until the day when all are subjected to the Son, who in turn will give over everything to the Father, so that ‘God might be all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28).”¹²²

3. “Your Kingdom Come” – the Fullness of Communion

One thing that moves us to God is the promise of his Kingdom. We hope for the Kingdom of God where we will be in communion with him in eternity because we know that it is only in God that we will find the truth and happiness we are searching for.¹²³ Leonardo Boff gives a definition of the Kingdom of God and explains thus:

The Kingdom of God is the realization of a fundamental utopia of the human heart, the total transfiguration of this world, free from all that alienates human beings, free from pain, sin, divisions and death. He [Jesus] came and announced: ‘The time has come; the Kingdom of God is at hand!’ He not only promised this new reality but already began to realize it, showing that it is possible in the world. He therefore did not

¹¹⁷ *RM*, no. 28.

¹¹⁸ *CCC*, no. 2673.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *RM*, no. 28.

¹²⁰ Cf. *CCC*, no. 768.

¹²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 769.

¹²² Forte, 36.

¹²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 27.

come to alienate human beings and carry them off to another world. He came to confirm the good news: This sinister world has a final destiny that is good, human and divine.¹²⁴

We all long for what is good and we hope for this good to be given us in the end. We express our faith in the life everlasting where we will experience the glory of God. All this talk of life everlasting and kingdom of God brings us to the idea of the “last things,” which generally refer to the end and destiny of the individual, to “death, judgment, hell and heaven.”¹²⁵ Thomas Rausch further explains this destiny of the individual:

The resurrection of the body, the second coming of Christ, the particular judgment at the moment of death, a general judgment on the last day, the immortality of the soul, heaven, the beatific vision, eternal life – all these “eschatological” (from the Greek *eschatos*, “last,” or “end”) concepts represent efforts to express the theological truth of our eternal destiny, a destiny rooted in the resurrection of Jesus. These are salvific terms speaking about the future God has in store for us.¹²⁶

One of the characteristics of the Church, the “People of God” is its destiny, the destiny to be with the Triune God in eternity. The Church having Christ as the head, “its destiny is the kingdom of God which must be further extended until it is brought to perfection by him at the end of time.”¹²⁷ We are from the beginning from God and we long to be with him, to be in communion with the Holy Trinity in the life eternal. The coming of the Kingdom of God is what we pray and hope for. “We pray together with the Risen Son, that the Father’s Kingdom may come through the powerful action of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁸ The Triune God is the ultimate goal of all that exists.

3.1. We pray for the Coming of the Kingdom of God

In praying the Lord’s Prayer, we utter that the Kingdom of God may come. It is the central message of Jesus’ ministry.¹²⁹ The catechism teaches us that it “refers primarily to the final coming of the reign of God through Christ’s return.... Since Pentecost, the coming of that Reign is the work of the Spirit of the Lord who complete[s]

¹²⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (USA: Orbis Books, 1979), 49.

¹²⁵ Colm McKeating, *Peace at the Last: A Christian Theology of the Last Things* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2009), 3.

¹²⁶ Rausch, 192.

¹²⁷ *LG*, no. 9.

¹²⁸ *CFC*, no. 2157.

¹²⁹ Cf. McKeating, 8.

his work on earth and brings us the fullness of grace.”¹³⁰ Here, we pray that God may rule over us as king over all. Gerald O’ Collins describes that:

The kingdom of God, already initiated by the coming of Jesus, will be definitely realized and will be recognized everywhere and by everyone. Hence we are to ask in the Lord’s Prayer that, once and for all at the end of time, God will reveal himself as the Father who wishes to save all people. The focus here is in God coming in the final future to rule as king.¹³¹

O’ Collins further describes the kingdom of God with the way Ignatius of Loyola took up ‘the Kingdom of Christ’ as a key contemplation in his Spiritual Exercises:

He pictures ‘Christ our Lord, the Eternal King’ gathering together the whole world and addressing each and every one as follows: ‘It is my will to conquer the whole world and all my enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with me, that by following me in suffering, he may follow me in glory (no.95).’¹³²

The Second Vatican Council teaches that “the dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God.”¹³³ In each and every one of us, we have the desire to be with God in communion and it is in the final coming of the Kingdom of God that this communion will be perfected in glory.

It is a longstanding invitation of God for us that we might be with him in eternity. Christ leads us to his Church that we may share with others this desire to be with him, instructing us to call God, Abba! Father! He sent the Holy Spirit to be present with us, abiding in us so as to be sanctified for the coming of the Kingdom. This we come to experience to reach that fullness of communion with the Triune God in eternity. But all this will come to fruition if we will deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ.¹³⁴ There must be an acceptance, a surrender of our will to labor with Christ, suffer with him and share in his glory in the Kingdom that is to come.

¹³⁰ CCC, no. 2818.

¹³¹ Gerald O’ Collins, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 78.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 82.

¹³³ GS, no. 19.

¹³⁴ Cf. Luke 9:23.

3.2. Surrendering to the Kingdom

To Pray for the coming of the Kingdom is to surrender to the will of the ruler. This is what we pray when we say “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” O’ Collins explains that “this petition entails then a call to surrender our lives to God’s loving will and plan for us. It expresses a desire that nothing except the present and future kingdom of God shall determine and rule all our actions and our entire life.”¹³⁵

God our Father “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”¹³⁶ The gospel of John narrates that Jesus said: “This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”¹³⁷ With this, Jesus handed down to us a new commandment of love: “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”¹³⁸ It is by following the words and examples of Jesus Christ, his complete obedience to the Father’s will that we may come to enter the Kingdom of God. The catechism teaches that:

We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son’s, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.¹³⁹

It is not always easy to surrender one’s will to another all the more if that will is vague to the person. Such is the will of God, the Father, and so the need to discern His will for us and try our very best to follow it. But one thing is sure, that it is the will of God to be in communion with Him. The act of self-surrender to the will of the Father as exemplified by the Son is our goal with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Praying to God the Father in communion with one another, we strive to do his will and long to enter into his Kingdom, for it is his will that we may be united with him. “If anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Such is the power of the Church’s prayer in the name of her Lord... Her prayer is also a communion of intercession with the all-holy Mother of God.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Gerald O’ Collins, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 87.

¹³⁶ 1 Timothy 2:4.

¹³⁷ John 6:40.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13:34.

¹³⁹ CCC, no. 2825.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 2827.

CHAPTER III

OUR COMMUNION MOVES US TO RESPOND IN LOVE

There is a saying, “Like father, like son.” The son or the child may have the same qualities of the father because of their relationship and because the child learns from the father. They may then have similar attitudes or ways of doing things. We may say the same thing of the Triune God with regard to His creation. Just as the Holy Trinity relates with one another and is moved to action, so are the children of God are able to relate with another and is moved to action.

The Son of God gave us a new commandment: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”¹⁴¹ Jesus has instructed us to love one another the way he loved us and it is only by being in communion with him that we learn how to love the way he loved. After the revelation of Jesus of the communion of the Holy Trinity, we are invited to be in a relationship, in communion with the same Holy Trinity. This communion with the Triune God, who is Love, teaches us to love and respond in love.

1. Mary our Mother, our model of Communion, Prayer and Action

As children of God, created in his image and likeness, with intellect and will, we learn something from the people we encounter in our lives. All the more if the person is very close and dear to us. These people have an influence in our way of thinking, in our choices and in our ways of doing things, consciously or unconsciously. They become our model that we aspire and imitate. We look up to them because of what they have done and what they have become. They may be our parents, our relatives, our teachers or our friends. Our desire to be like them may not be expressed in words, but our relationships with them affect us, influence us, and move us into action similar to theirs.

We heard of the saying, “Mothers know best.” When we were young, we ran back to our mothers and asked variety of questions, we come to learn that they know a lot of things. When we grew older, we ask for some advice and even words of wisdom to help us go through life. Mothers know us personally, for we are their children. They watched over us and have come to know our likes and dislikes, our weaknesses and strengths, and with their experiences they offer us what is best for us. They only want what is best for their child. Relating with our mothers, we then become influenced by them and imitate their examples.

This is also true with our relationship with Our Mother, Mary, the Mother of God. She knows who we are and she very much wants what is best for us. Jesus presented her mother to us because she is the best example of one who is in communion with the Triune God as expressed and seen through her prayer and action.

¹⁴¹ John 13: 34.

1.1. Mary, the Mother of God and Our Mother

The devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, has long been part of the history of the Church since the early centuries until now. For us Catholics, Mary plays a very important role in our lives and has a special place in our hearts. We learn from her the following of Christ being a true disciple of her Son. She is a person to imitate as one who puts into action her faith in God, showing complete trust and fidelity to the Word. It is also from her, we see a communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church places Mary as model of the Church, stressing her faith, charity and union with Christ.¹⁴²

We read from *Lumen Gentium* the teaching of the Church with regard to Mary, our Mother:

The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit.... But, being of the race of Adam, she is at the same time also united to all those who are to be saved; indeed, “she is clearly the mother of the members of Christ. . . since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.”¹⁴³

Mary became the Mother of the Son of God because of her complete trust in God especially when she replied to the angel her unfailing “yes.” At the foot of the cross, she became the mother of the children of God when Jesus presented his mother to his disciple: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”¹⁴⁴ After her Son’s Ascension, Mary “aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers.”¹⁴⁵ In her association with the apostles and several women, “we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Cf. *LG*, no. 63.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 53.

¹⁴⁴ John 19: 26-27.

¹⁴⁵ *LG*, no. 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 59.

In faith we believe that Mary, our Mother, was assumed into heavenly glory, a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.¹⁴⁷

[T]he Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.¹⁴⁸

With her Assumption into heaven, she continues her being mother to all and by her manifold intercession for us to her Son, continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. The Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.¹⁴⁹

1.2. Mary, our model in Communion, Prayer and Action

The Virgin Mary has always remained faithful to God. With her complete obedience to the Father's will, to her Son's salvific work and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith, hope and charity.¹⁵⁰ It is because of her fidelity and communion with God, that she never wavered in her answer at the Annunciation. With this, the Church rightly honors her with a special devotion.

Mary has by grace been exalted above all angels and men to a place second only to her Son, as the most holy mother of God who was involved in the mysteries of Christ: she is rightfully honored by a special cult in the Church. From the earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God, whose protection the faithful take refuge together in prayer in all their perils and needs.¹⁵¹

Mary, responding with the obedience of faith, certain that with God nothing is impossible, gave birth to the Son of God without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit. With her union and trust with her Son, she was confident to ask him to attend to the needs of the couple in the wedding at Cana, wherein Jesus performed his first miracle. At the foot of the cross, though burdened with the sight of her Son crucified, she held on to the will of God for the salvation of all men, hoping and trusting completely on her

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *CCC*, no. 966.

¹⁴⁸ *LG*, no. 59.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 62.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *CCC*, no. 967.

¹⁵¹ *LG*, no. 66.

Son's glorious reign. Thus, Mary was exalted and became the Church's model of faith, hope and charity.

When Jesus presented his mother to his disciple at the foot of the cross, he also presented to him a model of one who prays with complete trust in God for she knows how to be in union with her Son. When we ask for her intercession, we also follow the will of the Father. The catechism teaches us that:

Mary is the perfect *Orans* [pray-er], a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes, for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope.¹⁵²

To pray does not mean to simply utter words of praise and thanksgiving and a number of petitions. When we pray, it involves an expression of love to our neighbor. For one who prays and loves the Lord it must therefore be expressed in love of others. Mary did not only continuously pray, keeping everything "in her heart," she also expressed her prayers into love of neighbor with her deeds of love. Though there are only a few accounts of her service to her neighbor, I believe it is enough to point out the idea of prayer in action: when Mary made a long travel to the town of Judah and attended to her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant; when she expressed her concern for the newlywed couple at Cana heeding to her Son in behalf of them; when Mary stood and waited in sorrow at the foot of the cross keeping company and love to her Son, Mary definitely expressed her love for others.

Mary showed us how to be in communion with God the Father through her unflinching obedience; she presented us how to be a true disciple of her Son; and she displayed her openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. She taught us how to pray and she herself is the best example of one who prays. Her relationship with others, her love of neighbor is but an expression of what prayerful communion is all about. Prayer and Christian living is inseparable.

2. Prayer and Christian Living

When Jesus was with his disciples he was often seen praying to God and when he moved about in different towns, his dealings with others showed love and mercy. Later he instructed them with a new commandment:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹⁵² CCC, no. 2679.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.¹⁵³

Jesus has set for us an example to follow. Mary exemplified in her following of her Son, Jesus. The apostles did the same while they also spread the good news with the mission given to them by Jesus. And being followers of Christ we are to put to heart his instructions of love in our life. With regard to prayer and Christian living, the catechism teaches that:

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another (John 15:16-17)."¹⁵⁴

It continues with the words of Origen: "He 'prays without ceasing' who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing."¹⁵⁵ This then reminded me of the famous question with regard to Don Bosco's canonization: "When did Don Bosco pray?" to which the question was later altered to "When did Don Bosco not pray?" With all the works Don Bosco did, traveling here and there to attend to some matters, Don Bosco seemed to have no time for prayers. But here, genuine prayer is inseparable with Christian living, to which Don Bosco lived a life of loving others without a doubt, thus the canonization of our fatherly saint.

2.1. Give us this day our daily bread

In reading the Catechism for Filipino Catholics we find the definition of Christian moral life as

The following of Christ in all our daily free actions, values and attitudes, empowered by Christ's liberating and transforming presence, through the grace of his Spirit, within the Christian community. It is simply responding to the Gospel call to become loving persons, in the fullness of life with others in community before God, in imitation of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ John 15: 9-12.

¹⁵⁴ CCC, no. 2745.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ CFC, no. 715.

In praying the Lord's Prayer, we petition for God's generosity to bless us what we need to nourish our life, both material and spiritual. In so doing we should not only attend to our personal nourishment but also should be conscious of the needs of others and become loving persons. The catechism reminds us that:

The drama of hunger in the world calls Christians who pray sincerely to exercise responsibility toward their brethren, both in their personal behavior and in their solidarity with the human family. This petition of the Lord's Prayer cannot be isolated from the parables of the poor man Lazarus and of the Last Judgment.¹⁵⁷

In responding to God's call to become loving persons we are to give to others and to share the love that God has showered upon us. "In the Beatitudes, 'poverty' is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to communicate and share both material and spiritual goods, not by coercion but out of love, so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others."¹⁵⁸ In praying for daily bread, "we offer this petition in the Spirit who joins us together in Christian fellowship to address our needs to the Father, and brings the Risen Christ present to us in the Bread of Life."¹⁵⁹ The Lord's Prayer contains a list of petitions that asks of the Father to give us our physical and spiritual needs and have the will and generosity to reach out to our neighbor.

In prayer, we come to know the will of the Father and with the example of the Son of God we imitate his way of loving others with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Prayer should then not be stagnant. It should not stop in us, rather it should move us to others, to go and bring to others our experience of the Triune God, who is love. Prayer leads us to make sacrifices for our neighbor, sharing what we have to others being an answer ourselves of their prayers. This sacrifice is our expression of love of neighbor which is demonstrated to us by the Holy Trinity.

2.2. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Who said that community living is easy? From time to time, there may be some misunderstandings and qualms over something that may lead to confrontation or indifference with another. At some point, we were even taught that people whom we relate with difficulty would be our ticket to sanctity, if not insanity. I wonder if the divine persons had to argue over something that they do not agree upon. What if Jesus asked the Father: "Why not send the Holy Spirit to be crucified?" But just as the Triune God lived in perfect communion with one another, we too are called to live in perfect relationship with everyone else even if how imperfect it may seem to be in our life time.

¹⁵⁷ CCC, no. 2831.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., no. 2833.

¹⁵⁹ CFC, no. 2177.

When we pray that the Father may “forgive us our trespasses,” there is a condition in this request, that is, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” In this petition, we recognize our sins, our failings to love God and neighbor; we return to the Father like the prodigal son acknowledging one’s fault and, like the tax collector recognizing that we are sinners before him. We call upon the Father’s mercy because of his great love upon us through the redemption of his Son, the forgiveness of sins, but this outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. The first letter of John reminds us of how to love God:

Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.¹⁶⁰

Whenever we refuse to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them resistant to the Father’s merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace.¹⁶¹ How can we imitate the communion of the Triune God if we cannot learn to love the people here living with us? “The whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.”¹⁶² This movement of communion in love is best expressed in praise and worship in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

3. The Eucharist, “the source and summit of the Christian life” of Communion

Living in a community of religious priests and brothers, we have the privilege of attending the Holy Eucharist every day, in particular, every morning. We start the day with meditation followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist having God in our minds, first thing in the morning. This should be able to bring us to live a life that we are called to, a life of Christian living that is a life of following Christ. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that “all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”¹⁶³ We heard from the Gospel the call to holiness, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”¹⁶⁴ All of this we strive to do with the instruction of Jesus of loving God and neighbor both in words and deeds.

¹⁶⁰ 1 John 4:20-21.

¹⁶¹ Cf. CCC, no. 2840.

¹⁶² Ibid., no. 259.

¹⁶³ LG, no. 40.

¹⁶⁴ Matthew 5:48.

Lumen Gentium describes the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life.”¹⁶⁵ “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”¹⁶⁶ It is in the Eucharist that we come together and celebrate our union with God the Father, through his Son in the Holy Spirit. The catechism teaches that:

The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷

The Eucharist, being “the source and summit of Christian life,” is the sacrament that strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in our daily living, just as bodily nourishment restores lost strength. It is Christ himself who revives our love and enables us to be able to break our disordered attachment in this world.¹⁶⁸ The catechism quotes St. Fulgentius of Ruspe in this regard saying:

Since Christ died for us out of love, when we celebrate the memorial of his death at the moment of sacrifice we ask that love may be granted to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit. We humbly pray that in the strength of this love by which Christ willed to die for us, we, by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, may be able to consider the world as crucified for us, and to be ourselves as crucified to the world . . . Having received the gift of love, let us die to sin and live for God.¹⁶⁹

In receiving the Eucharist, we commune with Christ in his sacramental presence, thus we “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”¹⁷⁰ in a total covenant relationship which we experience in the indwelling Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ *LG*, no. 11.

¹⁶⁶ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 5.

¹⁶⁷ *CCC*, no. 1325.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 1394.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1394.

¹⁷⁰ Philippians 2:11.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *CFC*, no. 1716.

3.1. The Eucharist as Sacrament of love and unity

The Eucharist is essentially an act of thanksgiving and praise to the Father, a sacrificial memorial of Christ and his Body, and the presence of Christ by the power of his word and of his Spirit.¹⁷² In celebrating the Holy Eucharist the faithful come to have a deeper understanding of the Holy Trinity. John Paul II clarifies this Trinitarian Eucharistic worship in his letter to priests:

This worship is directed towards God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. In the first place towards the Father who “loved the world so much that He gave His only Son...” it is also directed in the Holy Spirit to the Incarnate Son... [whose] voluntary Death, glorified with the Resurrection, when sacramentally celebrated, brings us to adore the Redeemer.¹⁷³

It is in the Eucharist that we better express our unity with the Holy Trinity and to our neighbor, as Body of Christ. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy describes the Eucharist as “a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”¹⁷⁴ It is a sacrament that invites us to be united in love with Christ as our source of unity. This then strengthens our Christian life knowing that we are one with our Lord. In celebrating the Eucharist together, we, the faithful, are drawn into the compelling love of Christ, to become one heart in love and practice in deed what we profess by the Creed.¹⁷⁵

The Eucharist, being an act of thanksgiving, makes us realize the great blessings we have received from the Triune God. It is a reminder to all of us of the giving of the Father of his Son for our salvation. In every celebration of the Eucharist, we witness once more the love that was bestowed upon all peoples. Celebrating and receiving Christ in our hearts, it brings us to a renewal of our love of God and neighbor. The Holy Eucharist concludes with the sending forth of the faithful so as to fulfill the will of God in our lives, a mission which is given to all followers of Christ.

The sacrament calls us to renew our commitment to share in Christ’s redemptive mission. In the Eucharist we find meaning and value to all our actions, pains and sufferings since we, who are part of the Body of Christ, offer all our works to our Lord together with his own suffering. Here, we share with St. Paul his joy in suffering: “I am

¹⁷² Cf. CCC, no. 1358.

¹⁷³ *Dominicae Coenae* (DC), no. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), no. 47.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. CFC, 1704.

now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.”¹⁷⁶

3.2. The Lord's Prayer in the Eucharist

The Lord's Prayer, as mentioned earlier, is one of the most popular prayers in the world. It is the prayer of the Church, rooted in the Church's liturgy from the beginning, especially in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Here in the Philippines, this prayer has a great number of musical versions sung in different languages throughout the country. And with the popularity of the Rosary, this prayer is all the more familiar to Filipino Catholics.

In the Eucharistic liturgy, the Lord's Prayer is prayed by the assembly as the baptized disciples of Jesus. Gathered together as one Body of Christ, the prayer that Jesus taught us appears as the prayer of the whole Church revealing its full meaning and efficacy. “Placed between the *anaphora*¹⁷⁷ (the Eucharistic prayer) and the communion, the Lord's Prayer sums up on the one hand all the petitions and intercessions expressed in the movement of the *epiclesis*¹⁷⁸ and, on the other, knocks at the door of the Banquet of the kingdom which sacramental communion anticipates.”¹⁷⁹

We know from the Gospel of John that: “God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.”¹⁸⁰ Such is the power of the Church's prayer in the name of her Lord, above all in the Eucharist. As the Lord's Prayer is “an abridgement of the entire Gospel”¹⁸¹ as described by Tertulian, the catechism describes the Eucharist as “the sum and summary of our faith”¹⁸² and adding the words of St. Irenaeus, “Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.” The Eucharist calls us to live what we have celebrated in the sacrament being ourselves Christ for others. In hearing the Word of God and receiving Christ's Body and Blood, we are to live the Gospel in our lives and share it to others. Having in our minds the thought of the Eucharist as a thanksgiving, we cannot but be grateful to the Holy Trinity and express this gratitude through our worship and praise of God and through our love of neighbor.

¹⁷⁶ Colossians 1:24.

¹⁷⁷ Anaphora (Gr. Offering). The Eucharistic prayer or canon of the Mass. Normally it includes an introductory dialogue, thanksgiving, the words of institution from the last supper, the anamnesis, the epiclesis and the doxology, (O' Collins and Farrugia, 9).

¹⁷⁸ Epiclesis (Gr. Invocation). In general, any invocation of God to bless and sanctify material creation. In the anaphora or canon of the Mass, the epiclesis is the prayer asking that the Spirit or the Logos descend upon the gifts to change them into the body and blood of Christ for the spiritual profit of those who receive them, (Ibid., 76-77).

¹⁷⁹ CCC, no. 2770.

¹⁸⁰ John 9:31.

¹⁸¹ Haase, 14.

¹⁸² CCC, no. 1327.

CONCLUSION

“Lord, teach us to pray.”¹⁸³ And indeed Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, calling God, “Abba, Father!” Up until now, I find this request to the Lord still very valid. We who are social people, who relate and communicate to others our thoughts and desires, will always have the inner longing to communicate to God. Jesus understood these needs of ours and so revealed to us his Father, and instructed us to relate with God as his children. This we are able to do with the promptings of the Holy Spirit, moving us to call God, “Abba, Father!” In praying the Lord’s Prayer, we enter into communion with the Triune God together with the whole Church, praying as one Body of Christ.

In making this theological synthesis, I come to appreciate more the value of the Lord’s Prayer and prayer in general. God is always revealing himself to us through his Son and in the Holy Spirit, wanting us to trust in him as his children. We are taught to ask from the Father and have faith that he will grant us our petitions. And in the end, it is our eternal union with him that he so desires, to be with him in his Kingdom. As a minister of the Word, I find it a must to share to others this great prayer, a summary of the Gospels, and let them realize the desire of the Father for all his children. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”¹⁸⁴ It is always the love of God, the Fatherliness, that he always expresses to us his children so as to completely trust him. But human as we are, prone to sin and infidelity, we fail to recognize this great love many times. We have to be reminded and reminded and reminded time and again. God does not cease to love, and so we must never cease to come back to him.

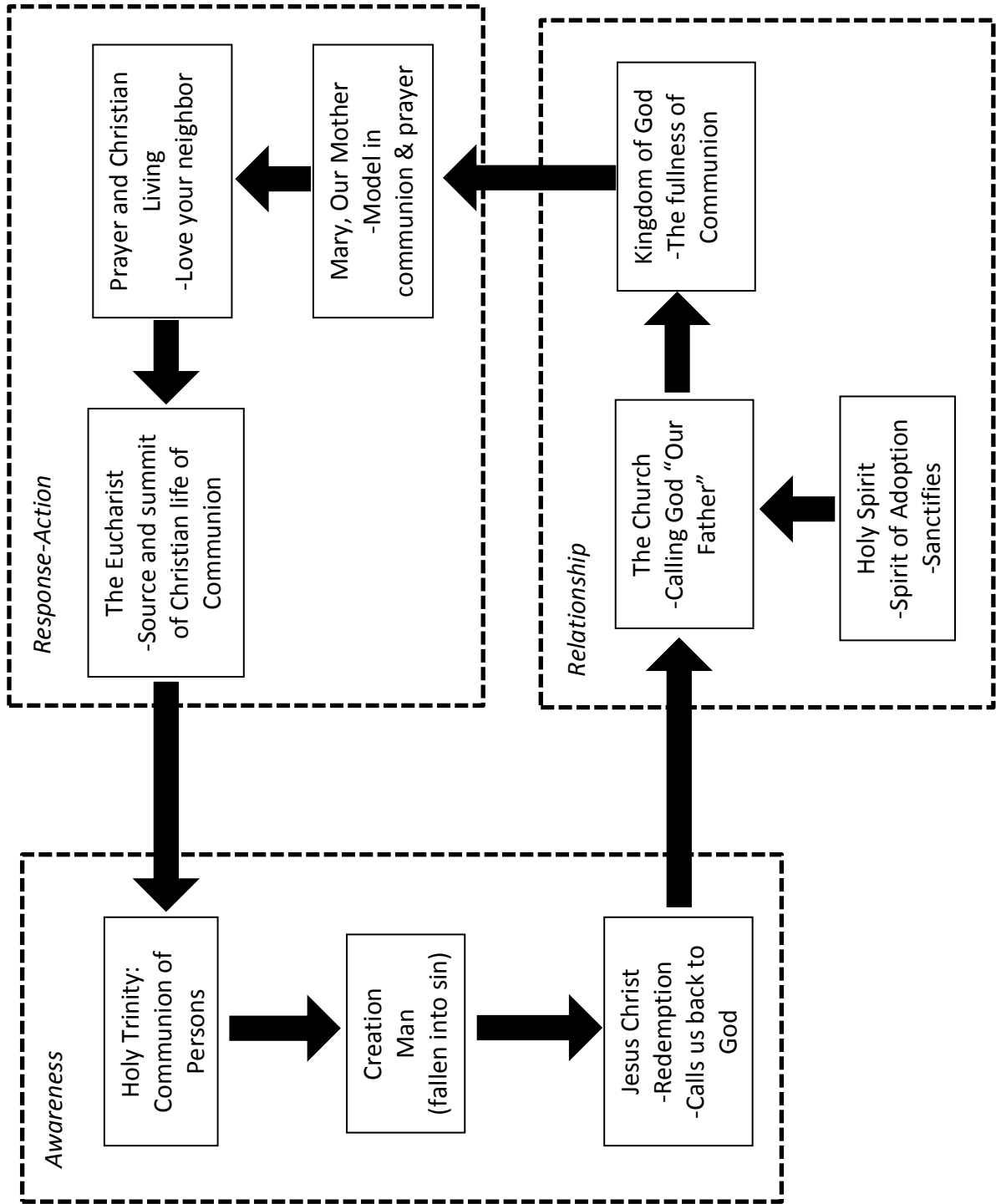
Jesus, the Son of God, taught his disciples to pray, encouraging everyone to call God, “Abba, Father.” It is indeed a prayer that makes us realize that we are children of God and therefore are related to each and every one. Having revealed to the disciples of Christ this relationship with God and among the people, there is then the responsibility toward each other and to practice the love that Jesus himself commanded. Our prayers do not limit us to utter only words, but that it should move us to action towards our neighbor. In praying we ask from the Father all that we need in this life and also the life after, hoping and trusting in God that he will grant all our petitions and that in the end we will be in communion with God, the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit.

To call God Father is truly a blessing, a grace in itself. I hope and pray that I may always be a faithful son of the Father, with the love of Christ and with the courage and strength from the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸³ Luke 11: 1.

¹⁸⁴ John 3: 16.

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