

## Spirituality of The Catholic Faith

Spirituality in the Catholic Faith is centered around the sacraments and in particular the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Christ's true presence on Earth. It is through the regular worship of Christ at mass that a true Catholic spirituality finds its foundations. The mass is also the primary prayer of the church, because it is in the mass that we remember the source of redemption. Christ on the cross offered himself to the Father in reparation for our iniquities. This free and total self offering is the cause of our redemption. Our individual or collective human offerings or good works could have never redeemed our fallen humanity. It is in the re-presentation of the sacrifice on Calvary that we offer again to the Father, "The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ". Therefore, it is in the mass that we recognize with all humility the awesomeness of Christ's actions. It is in this ultimate prayer of the church that a Catholic spirituality finds its foundations.

The centrality of the Eucharist is complemented by a life of devotion to prayer. The church has a rich history of prayer for one to base spirituality on. A devotion to the saints allows one to learn their historical life and particular spirituality. However, it is also through the reality of their communion in heaven that one can pray for their intercession to Christ in order to deepen their own personal spirituality here on earth. Similarly devotions to Mother Mary can be of great use in the Catholic tradition to increase ones spirituality in relation to Christ. It is through developing spiritual friendships with those in heaven that the Christian hope can begin to be lived out here on earth. From these friendships, developed through novenas and prayers, a reality of heaven can enter into one's prayer. The spirituality of prayer then takes on a level of

affection for the heavenly angels and saints. This then leads to a deeper love of the Most Holy Trinity because the person begins to enter into a deeper awe of God's infinite capabilities, grandeur, and love. God becomes a sure reality in one's mind, but this reality is infinitely exquisite because through prayerful contemplation anything ever imagined about God is dwarfed by His unidentifiable reality.

Prayer leads one to a search for greater understanding of doctrine. Catholics today have a wealth of information available to them. It is through self reading and catechesis that a Catholic today can develop a very good knowledge of the proper doctrines and teachings of the church. To some, the doctrines of the church may seem obtrusive to the freedom proposed by Christ. However, it is due to the wisdom of the church that the doctrines serve not only to guide us to greater truth but also to a deeper spirituality. Obedience is an integral part to the Christian call of discipleship. Doctrine of the church must be obeyed and thus draws one into a spirituality of trust, obedience, and patience. From prayer a person enters the spiritual mystery of God. It is through the doctrine of the church that this mystery is grounded into the reality of the world. And yet this grounding serves to deepen the spirituality of the person. Their faith grows in levels that a solely prayerful experience could never attain.

However, it is also in the carrying out of ethical actions that we demonstrate our spirituality in our life. The doctrines of the church help distinguish the proper ethics a Catholic should have. By being obedient to these ethical choices in the day to day decisions and in the confrontational dilemmas presented by our society, a strong Catholic can complement their prayer life with an active life of ethically wise actions. The ethics of the church serve to actualize ones spirituality. They are then able to take their spirituality of prayer into this modern society and become radical witnesses of the love of Christ.

This living out of the faith by following ethical actions is accentuated by a life of charity. A spirituality of total self surrender to God becomes the goal of a person at the deepest level of spirituality. When prayer, doctrine, and ethics are in union the person becomes enveloped into the Christian mystery. Their every desire potentially becomes a desire to please God. Anything contrary to this centralized spirituality on God seems to be a waste. The day is wrapped up in the spirituality of prayer, which seeks understanding of the Church's doctrine, which leads the person to ethically correct actions. These actions of charity draw the person back to prayer. Prayer can then be lost in action and vice versa because one's life becomes a continuous stream of prayerful yearnings and ethical actions of charity based on the doctrine of the church.

Therefore, the foundation of Catholic spirituality is centered on the prayer of mass and is actualized by dogma and ethics. It is from this universal prayer of the church that a Catholic develops a spirituality of deep intimacy with God. Through doctrine the Catholic begins to understand the teachings of the church, which increases one's spirituality by deepening the virtues of trust, obedience, and patience. These doctrines serve to develop a strong conscience that allows one to make ethical decisions in their lives. By being ethical a Catholic's spirituality is radiated into the world. It is then that he or she becomes a true follower of Christ and finds the fulfillment of spirituality by giving their life completely to the service of Christ.