

CTK Mission Principle #6:

We the people of Christ the King, called by God our Father to be surrendered to the Lord Jesus, in the power of His Holy Spirit, in the heart of His Church.

- **to be a people committed to prayer, as “disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God...as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.” (Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, #10)**

“The apostles said to the Lord: ‘Increase our faith.’” This statement begins today’s Gospel. How often have we made the same request, believing, and usually rightly so, that an increase in our faith would greatly enhance our lives? The Lord Jesus responds to this request in several different ways. One of which was dealt with in an earlier reflection on our Mission Statement—the one concerning reading Scripture. The more we immerse ourselves in the Word of God the more our faith grows, since, as the Book says, faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ. So, if we are asking the Lord Jesus for more faith but ignoring the Book, our results will be mixed, at best. We also know that the reception of the Sacraments increases our faith, as the sanctifying grace of the Sacraments always brings us the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. But in the second reading, Paul points out to Timothy that it is not enough to simply have received a powerful, faith granting Sacrament at some time in the past. We must continue to actively engage that Sacrament in the present. We must heed his advice “to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.” All of us who have been confirmed have received that flame through the imposition of the hands of a successor of the apostles. What are we doing to fan it into a flame?

One way to answer that is to remind ourselves just Who is the giver of that flame? It is, of course, the Lord Jesus Himself. If we want that flame to ignite, if we want to grow in faith, what are we doing to come closer to the Lord Jesus? The sixth Mission Statement principle gives an absolutely essential answer to this: we must pray, we must be a people committed to prayer. There are many different kinds of prayer in the Church; we have already addressed Sacramental prayer, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This portion of our Mission Statement is addressed to the issue of our private prayer, our personal prayer life. Do we spend time with the Lord Jesus in prayer, every day? St. Thomas Aquinas gives us a key insight to prayer when he points out that since each of the Divine Persons is a Person, we should have a personal relationship with each of Them. The key to our relationships with the Trinity is the Lord Jesus Himself, He is the One Who leads us to the Father, and He is the One Who fills us with the Holy Spirit. The closer we come to Him the deeper we will be brought into the entire life of the Trinity. This would be a daunting situation if it weren’t for the fact that it is clearly His will: that He Himself, time and again in the Gospels, calls us to pray. The heart of our relationship with the Lord Jesus, amazingly enough, is friendship, our friendship with Him.

This is hard to grasp—most friendships are based on some kind of peer relationship or some other commonality. We are definitely not peers with the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity! In fact, friendship with Him is something we would never dare claim or even pursue if it weren't for the fact that it is His idea in the first place. "I call you friends," He Himself says to us. (John 15:15) Knowing that the heart of our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus is one of friendship, we are then given the means to how we should approach our prayer life. The key to any human friendship is that you must spend time together. If you don't, the friendship will never develop, or the existing friendship will gradually wither away. A friendship relationship between two persons must be invested in, with adequate time spent, and the more important the friendship is, the more time must be spent developing it. Since there is no relationship in our lives as important as our relationship with the Lord Jesus, it necessarily follows that spending time with Him should be one of the highest priorities of our daily lives.

Our prayer obviously includes liturgical prayer, Sacramental prayer, etc., but the prayer we are speaking of here is that personal prayer, us and Jesus, or, as the great St. Teresa of Jesus put it, we engage in "a simple conversation with the One we know loves us." This is one-on-one time, uniting our hearts as individuals to the Sacred Heart of the King of Kings, spending time with Him, sharing with Him our hopes, our fears, our dreams; taking the time to praise, worship, and adore Him. In other words, it includes concretely sharing with Him all those things that deeply committed friends would share with each other. Some might ask what the point of all this is, since He knows it all anyway. True, having an omniscient Friend is out of the ordinary, to put it mildly. But from our side, our lowly human side, it is in the very act of sharing our hearts with Him that the relationship is built. When you share information with a friend, the purpose is not just to data exchange, the purpose is to build the relationship; so too in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. When we honestly, sincerely share our hearts with Him, the relationship grows, the friendship deepens, and as we know Him better, we trust Him more. In other words, our faith grows.

How much time should we spend? The answer can vary depending on many factors, but the bottom line is: if you are not experiencing growing more deeply in love with Him, then the chances are, you're not spending enough time with Him. Can you honestly say yet that He is your best friend? That is His desire for you. Spend the time with Him that you need to, and that friendship will grow and develop and He will be even more the center of your life that He desires to be.

Reflection Questions:

For the individual: What am I doing to grow in my friendship with the Lord Jesus through prayer?

For the family: How can we as a family deepen our common prayer life with the Lord Jesus?

For the parish: How can we as a parish become more and more a people of prayer?