

## PALAUTIAN WAY OF PRAYING

There are certain things that make us be who we are as palautian family: those elements of our charism that defines our being in the Church. These are, among others: faith, encounter, Eucharist, passion for God and neighbor, Word of God, relationships with the Church, prayer, Mary, missionary commitment, etc. All those elements of our charism we express them daily in a way we live our lives, especially through the life of faith, confidence to God, the way we relate with others, the love we show them.

One of the important parts of this charism is PRAYER. "We pray as we live, because we live as we pray" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2725).

Father Palau was a man of a deep prayer, deep experience of God. His prayer was not just some scattered moments of silence and retreat, but we can say that his whole life was filled, impregnated with prayer. He would retire for prolonged days to pray in silence and solitude in his cave in Aitona or Montauban, or he would climb the Mount Vedra staying there alone in prayer and fasting, awaiting for his Beloved. And everything he would discover in prayer, he would bring it to his life, making that this prayer would go changing his life. For him, prayer was a **way of uniting oneself with God**, is something indispensable in a life of every Christian. And this union has to be seen also in action, in a way we relate with others, the way we take care of the Body of Christ. Because the meaning of our lives is „to will what God wills" (**union of wills**) and it is achieved in prayer and in service to the Church.

### WHAT IS PRAYER?

*„Prayer is an intimate, friendly and familiar dealing that a person has with God" (Catechism of Virtues, 33)*

*„To pronounce this four lettered word [LORD] little time is needed; but to say them duly, speaking according to ordinary law or minding the ordinary course of grace, it is necessary that long hours of prayer precede them" (Letter of a Director, 39)*

*„He is waiting for the Church to shout, saying: «Get up, why are you asleep, Lord? Save us for the glory of your holy name». He is waiting until we duly pray for this grace" (Letter of a Director, 7)*

According to the fragment we saw, prayer is **a way we relate with God**. It is not only to say graces before the meal, or to make a sign of a cross when we wake up or pass near to the Church. It is not only to pray rosary or novenas. It is a long process of getting to know God, getting to know his heart, his mind, his thoughts, plans, his will. It is a **mutual process**, because God is waiting for us, He desires to establish relationship with us, to reveal and share with us his will and his life. But **it takes time**. In the experience of Francisco Palau, it took him almost whole life to build this relationship with the Church, until She finally revealed herself to him. God doesn't reveal his secrets to those to whom he cannot trust. That's why it take time to build relationship with, and time is sometimes the last thing we want to give him...

*„The doctors of your spiritual mother are the eternal Father and his only Son, and the medicine is prayer in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. And this prayer duly addressed to the Father and to the Son is such an effective medicine that it is sufficient to heal completely all her wounds”* (Letter of a Director, 20)

*„God in his providence has decided not to remedy our ills and not to grant us his grace except through prayer, and that by the prayer of some, others will be saved”* (Letter of a Director, 8)

Prayer is the **only medicine capable of healing the wounds of the Church**. First, it is a medicine capable of healing our own wounds. Because many of our wounds are kept in our heart, it is necessary that we will allow God to enter and touch those parts of our heart and soul where no one else can enter. Those parts where we feel ashamed, guilty, hurt, wounded... the silence of prayer and presence of God's love are the only medicine. And also the wounds of others when we pray for their needs, because prayer is not only a selfish looking at ourselves and our miseries, but it takes on account the needs of others. May the prayer become our vaccine for all the bad things that are happening around us...

*„These souls possessed by the Holy Spirit, seeing that the member of the Church to which they belong is in serious danger of death, just because they are healthy members, will they be able to rest, or will they day and night be occupied in other things that in shouting and clamoring to God for the salvation of the Church?”* (Letter of a Director, 19)

*„Your spirit is also continuously preoccupied by the thoughts which do not allow my poor spirit a moment's rest”* (Letter of a Director, 2)

Prayer is born out of a constant preoccupation and care for others, for those who need the most our prayer. Already Saint Paul was inviting the Christians to „pray continually” (1Tes 5:17). So does Francisco Palau. When we worry and are preoccupied, we have the same intrusive thoughts. We just can't stop worrying. Palau is inviting us to „worry for the Church” but not in a worldly way, but to transform this worry and preoccupation into prayer. **If you have to worry, worry for the Church. And while you worry, pray for all those whom you are worried about.** May our worried be transformed into prayer...

## HOW TO BE IN PRAYER?

### WHAT ATTITUDES DO WE NEED?

*„The principal director and master in this tremendous fight is no other than the Holy Spirit. It is he who leads souls to this arena; it is he who teaches the method, for them to develop spiritual skills which must be observed in order to attain success; and it is he who is one in spirit with the soul, gives strength and power to struggle and triumph the omnipotent God the Father and the omnipotent God the Son”* (Letter of a Director 27)

So, let's go back to school allowing the Holy Spirit to be our teacher and guide.

*„What is prayer? The ascent of our soul to God; or better, an interior act, inspired by religion, through which a person asks God for graces recognizing him as the author of all good” (Catechism of Virtues, 33)*

First thing we do when we pray, we **recognize that everything comes from God**. That his grace doesn't depend on our merits and efforts, but on His love. Only humble hearts are open to see this truth...

*„Primarily, as a spouse of Jesus since your baptism, and especially since you have consecrated yourself completely to God, you must clothe yourself with zeal for the honour of your Spouse” (Letter of a Director, 11)*

We need to say and remember that what most offends God is our sin. Nowadays we seldom talk about sin, as if we believed that it is fine to sin and receive communion without being in the state of grace. We need to **honor God with our life** filled with his grace. Only pure hearts can truly see and honor him...  
Ley us be perfect as he is perfect (Mt 5:48)

*„Be a true mother to all, whether they are good or bad. Put them in your heart, as the hen protects her chicks under her wings [Mt 23,37], and risks her own life to defend them from the claws of the hawk, so you must consider them as your true sons, and cover them with the wings of your heart. Offer yourself to God for them, once and a thousand times, as a victim of propitiation, urge the Lord if he wants to chastise them with the punishments they deserve for their sins, to unload them all upon your head, because you also are a sinner and one of them” (Letter of a Director, 11)*

God is Father-Mother and Palau invites us to incite in us the same feelings. A true mother is ready to offer her own life for her children, taking any danger. She even asks God to make her suffer all the consequences of bad deeds of her children. Only truly loving hearts can **LOVE LIKE A MOTHER!**

*„Then, as the enemies are destroying the walls and towers of the holy city of God [Jos 6,20; Heb 11,30], the Catholic Church, you are no longer a weak cowardly woman, but as a valiant man, clothed with the uniform of Jesus Christ [Eph 6]” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

It takes a lot of **courage** to go for a war, to defend your own country, family, children, people you love. And Christian life is a constant battle against not only the world, but all the spiritual forces of hell. Only hearts filled with courage can win this battle...

*„Put on the breastplate of justice, detesting everything in your heart which is opposed to the will of God” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

**Just** person is a person that knows the will of God and is ready to fulfill it in her life, detesting anything that is opposite to what God wills. It is not always easy to follow his will, specially when it goes against what we want, or against what the whole world considers good. We need this kind of **CONVERSION!**

*„Gird your loins with the girdle of truth, which you will find in the teaching of the Church” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

**Truth** for Francisco Palau can be found in the teachings of the Church. We cannot find it by ourselves, even less we cannot create it by ourselves. Only God

is the source of truth and the Church helps us to find this truth and practice is in our life. We are encouraged to LEARN and KNOW the truth through constant **effort in reading Bible and listening to Magisterium.**

*„Cover your head with the helmet of complete confidence with the help of the Almighty.” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

A helmet covers our head from any harm. A spiritual helmet that covers our thoughts, **protects us from all the thoughts that make us doubt, lose confidence in God, lose hope.** It protects us from unbelief, from the voices coming from „other shepherds” who want to harm the flock. May the Lord protect our hearts and thoughts from all kind of doubt!

*„Let your feet be shod with a bold and firm determination to acknowledge Jesus Christ, even at the cost of great sacrifice.” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

Being Christian is not always popular. Not always and not everywhere. Everytime we do things that are not according to God's will, we deny our belongingness to him. It takes a lot of determination to **stuck always to Jesus,** in everything we say, think, do... Only deep relationship with him can make us ready to suffer for him any kind of persecution.

*„Take hold of the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the evil spirit” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

**Faith** is the main weapon against the evil one. Only faith can cast demons from our lives, making us live fully the kind of life God has prepared for us. Faith is a shield for all the evil things. It makes us persevere in good disposition even in times of trial.

*„And then hold on to the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God [Eph 6,11ff], from whom alone you can receive strength and courage invoking him in spirit and at all times with every kind of prayer, supplication, and petition with unceasing vigilance and perseverance that will defend and save the Church” (Letter of a Director, 12)*

For Francisco Palau, the **Word of God** is a secure guide that illumines, shows the way, guides and gives lights. Whenever he felt lost, unsure of what was happening to him, he looked in the Bible for the answer and from them drew inspiration, courage and light. May we also find in the Word of God our companion in life's journey...

*„And as the fight is so terrible, there is a need for courage not to flee like a coward, but also much instruction on how to manage in all the difficult moments that will occur” (Letter of a Director, 31)*

Let us not deceive ourselves: prayer is not easy. It is not always joy and consolation, but it is a hard daily work. We need courage and determination but we also need **instruction** and people around us who will help us in this journey with their advice and good example. Together, we are stronger!

*„It is convenient to liberate oneself spiritually from self-love, selfishness and pride in order to be totally of God and in God. The prayer for the needs of the Church will be short and frequent and for the rest,*

*occupy yourself for the good of your neighbours. Engage yourself in the welfare of others, for to take care of others is to take care of God, and to take care of God in his moral body, is to be truly of God” (Letter 6,4)*

This sentences summarizes it all well: prayer is **to forget about oneself and become all of God!**

## HOW TO PRAY?

*„To go through in prayer, an act of union serves as a preparation. This act is a very simple and natural thing. It is to desire whatever God wills and not to desire whatever he does not will; it is to open your heart and offer it for whatever he asks and has prepared for you” (Letter 42,1)*

First is first and for prayer we also **need to prepare**. Francisco Palau invites us to make a simple act of union with God as a way of preparing our hearts for prayer. This act simply consists in disposing our heart making it available for whatever God may command. Simple but not easy. In reality it takes much humility and courage to give oneself to God so completely that we will have the same feelings, thoughts, desires as God has. But without it there will be no real progress in our spiritual life.

*„In the first act the soul looks at God as spouse to Spouse, as lover to a beautiful, infinitely lovable and loving object” (Letter 42,2)*

After this act of union, after preparation, Palau invites us to **look at Jesus as the object of our love, to fall in love with him** just like a young girl or boy falling in love for the first time. He encourages us to see in him all perfections that we will never find in any human person. Jesus is just the perfect one, the best of the best, the most beautiful and tender person of the world. That’s for women. For men, he suggests to see in Mary all the perfections of the Church and fall in love with this image of the Church.

*„The second act looks at him as head of a moral body. Look at him in this body that is his Church, wounded and crucified, poor, needy, persecuted, rejected and scorned” (Letter 42,2)*

Christ is never alone. He is forever **united to his body: the Church**. And this body is not always so perfect and beautiful like He is. Many times this body is in pain, suffering, wounded, poor and in need. It is persecuted, rejected, marginalized. And because it is the body of our beloved, it needs our care.

*„Under this consideration, offer yourself to take care of it and render it services that are within your ways and means. Moreover, look at him as Lord and owner and king of the universe and since he does not reign in us without us, except with us, in us and for us, under this point of view offer yourself also whatever he wants from you” (Letter 42,2)*

As a final act of prayer, Palau encourages us to repeat this offering: „Take care of me, Lord, and I will take care of you”. The needs of the Church urge us to **do for her whatever is at our hand**. But our enthusiasm slowly falls down. That's why we need to **come back to prayer** to regain our deep motivation for mission: to take care of a wounded body of Christ in our brothers and sisters in need.

## AND WHAT ABOUT DISTRACTIONS?

This is the first question that always appears: what to do when I get distracted during prayer? (not even „if I get distracted”, because distractions seem to be a common experience of every person who has ever tried to pray. Well, it was also what Palau experienced, up to the such point that it made him exclaim: „*I would wish to bury my body in the tomb so that in this struggle my spirit will not be distracted from its object!*” (The Solitary Life, 35). In his writings Palau shares with us some ideas that may help us in dealing with this issue.

*„Pure, chaste, virgin love works in solitude with the fullness of its strength, because this it can see its object with all possible clarity, that is, the holy Church, or God and the neighbours. In **solitude, retreat, silence** it works with complete efficacy, because there nobody distracts it. The object of love appointed by law for the human heart is immense, infinite; it is so great that in spite of being almost as immense as our capacity, it fills the whole heart if it is empty; and for these, actions like **human conversation is a disturbance**” (My Relationships 16,15)*

*„I am not ashamed, therefore, to confess before all those who condemn my lifestyle as a shocking scandal, that I have gone into **caves and hollows of the rocks [Rv 6, 15]** and into their crevices **looking for deep silence** that reigns in the bosom of the earth, since my spirit is more free from distractions, while buried in those” (The Solitary Life, 22)*

One indispensable thing is solitude and silence. It's almost impossible to pray when you are immersed in conversations with other person than God. Sometimes in prayer we imagine many scenes, dialogues with ourselves and others. These conversation are great disturbance. We need to look for a deep silence, for real solitude of heart. Solitude can be scary. When we are left alone, when we have noone to watch us, we discover who we really are, and it can scare us. But God wants us the way we are, not some pretenders. This is the pure love, where we stop pretending. Let us search for these caves where we can be free, where we can simply be.

*„The **material goods** are placed by the Creator for the service of man, nevertheless, many times a stone of scandal, fall and ruins; the attraction is so alluring that conscience and the law of reasoning is not listened to, thus subjugating and distracting the heart. A virtue that it disposed, strengthened, corroborates in order to follow the dictate of conscience that at no time will leave and drag along the enjoyment, comfort, satisfaction and pleasures in life; a virtue that preserved and free the disordered passion, directs all its potentials and senses in order to have proper aim, except deliberated by reasoning; this virtue is necessary and is called **temperance**.” (Journalistic Pages 1582)*

Our heart can get attached to the things or persons we possess. The more we possess, the more difficult it is to pray, because we don't feel we need God in our life. These attachments make us believe that we are secure. Or, contrary, they make us worry too much about our possession, make us worry about losing some things or even persons that we are attached to. Palau invites us to grow in virtues, especially in virtue of temperance that can put order to our passion and

possession. „*It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt 19:23). It is hard for a rich person to discover the kingdom that already is in his heart through prayer and meditation.

*„I arose and went down the mountain. I began holy Mass very distracted, so I could not gather my thoughts. And so I reached the consecration, and as I raised the Host a very loving voice said to me:*

*–Look at me, **I am here.**” (My Relationships 9,41)*

*„In an instance I was distracted, some kind of filial terror reminded me of the **presence** of Jesus on the Altar” (My Relationships 4,22)*

*„**Love** was awakened and it was impossible for me to be distracted with other occupations” (My Relationships, 5,1)*

The best way of dealing with distraction is to **be aware** of the One who is with us. „*Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me. My beloved is mine and I am his*” (Sg 2:8.10.16a). Our awareness of his presence and love are the best what we can do to remain focused during prayer. Recall it constantly that He is there when you pray, that He is waiting for you, desiring to enter in relationship with you. Look at him, look at his head and his body, and allow love to guide you.

## **EASY TO SAY...**

Remember that you are never alone. We are many who day by day struggle for a meaningful and transforming life of prayer.

If you need concrete help, we invite you to use during your prayer some simple canons based on the Writings of Francisco Palau.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL08VWuJNxoss-7mo7Eie4K-RXgi0eiDWm>