

“Spiritual Theology” by Jordan Aumann, OP

Study Questions - Chapter Nine

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-Means of Spiritual Growth-

References: CCC

<p><i>The Liturgy of the Hours: 1174-1178</i> <i>Thy Kingdom Come: 2816-2881</i> <i>In Brief: 1710-1715</i></p>

Additional References:

<p><i>“Praying with the Dominicans” by John Vidmar, O.P.</i> <i>“New Seeds of Contemplation” by Thomas Merton</i> <i>“Abandonment to Divine Providence” by Jean-Pierre de Caussande</i> <i>“Contemplative Prayer” by Thomas Merton</i> <i>“Opening to God “ by Thomas H. Green, S. J.</i> <i>“The Breath of the Mystic” by George A. Maloney</i> <i>“When the Well Runs Dry” by Thomas H. Green S.J.</i> <i>“Weeds Among the Wheat” by Thomas H. Green S.J.</i> <i>“Seeking Spiritual Direction” by Thomas Dubay</i></p>
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Questions

1. How are the Sacraments a means to spiritual growth?

It is in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, that "the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification.....In theological terms we would say that the sacramental effect ex opere operato must be conjoined to the effect ex opere operantis. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the degree of grace received in the worthy reception of a sacrament will depend ultimately on the intensity and perfection of one's disposition..... the grace flowing from each sacrament is a special grace proper to the sacrament in question, and that each sacrament corresponds to a particular need of the Christian as an individual or as a member of the Christian community.

2. Define or give an example of the following terms:

a. *Ex opere operato*

confers grace ex opere operato, that is, by their own intrinsic power

b. *ex opere operantis*

meritorious good works and the prayer of petition -- produce their effects ex opere operantis, that is, their efficacy depends on the dispositions of the human agent, working under the impetus of grace and relying on God's benevolent love

3. What is your understanding of how the sacraments, meritorious good works, and the prayer of petition act as means of spiritual growth?

To put on Christ and to grow in his likeness require the use of positive means by which grace and charity can reach their full expansion and intensity. These positive means can be divided into the three principal ones that are necessary for all Christians -- the sacraments, meritorious good works, and the prayer of petition -- and certain secondary aids to growth in holiness.

4. How do the Sacraments parallel our life span from "womb to tomb"?

There are three ways by which the life of the body is directly perfected:

Baptism: *First, by generation, by which a man begins to exist and to live. Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is baptism*

Confirmation: *Secondly, by growth, by which one is brought to full size and strength. Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is confirmation*

Eucharist: *Thirdly, by nourishment...The Eucharist corresponds to this in the life of the spirit.*

Since man at times suffers infirmity, both bodily infirmity and the spiritual infirmity which is sin, he needs a cure for his malady, and this is twofold:

Penance: *One is the healing which restores health. And corresponding to this in the life of the spirit, is penance*

Final Rites/Anointing: *The other cure is the restoration of former vigor by suitable exercise and diet. In the spiritual life the anointing corresponds to this*

With respect to the whole community, man is perfected in two ways:

Marriage: *Secondly, by natural propagation. Both in the corporeal and in the spiritual order this is accomplished by matrimony*

Holy Orders: *First, by receiving the power to govern the community and to exercise public office. In the life of the spirit the sacrament of holy orders corresponds to this. As the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:27) points out, priests offer sacrifice not for themselves alone but for the people.*

5. How do the sacraments unite us in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification?

It is in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, that "the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification"

6. Reflect on the following statement from the text: *"In theological terms we would say that the sacramental effect ex opere operato must be conjoined to the effect ex opere operantis. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the degree of grace received in the worthy reception of a sacrament will depend ultimately on the intensity and perfection of one's disposition."*

7. What are the three ways by which the life of the body is directly perfected?

Baptism- *constitutes a new birth into the life of grace*

Confirmation- *the development and further ratification of the effects of baptism; It is at this phase of development that the young adult receives the Holy Spirit*

Eucharist- *as sacrament and as sacrifice*

8. Fr. Aumann writes that *"With respect to the whole community, man is perfected in two ways."* What are they?

Marriage and Holy Orders

9. Reflect on the following: *"Baptism is a commitment to a way of life."*

[This is a discussion/personal reflection question]

10. What are the three things that baptism bestows upon the recipient?

baptism bestows on the recipient the life of sanctifying grace, the infused theological and moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit

11. Fr. Aumann notes that *"In recent years great emphasis has been placed on the sacrament of confirmation as the sacrament of Catholic Action and the basis of the priesthood of the laity."* What does that mean for us as Lay Dominicans?

[This is a discussion/personal reflection question]

12. How does the text define "apostolate"? What activity or deed constitutes an apostolate?

apostolate comprises any work or deed by which we bring God to souls and souls to God..."each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ."

13. Fr. Aumann identifies several functions or values of the Mass. What are they?

adoration

reparation for sin

prayers/petitions

thanksgiving

14. Name the four ways in which we are to receive the Eucharist.

it is necessary, as remote dispositions, that one be in the state of grace and have the right intention..... to make a proximate preparation for receiving the Eucharist

first requisite is faith

Secondly, one should approach the Eucharist with profound reverence and deep humility

Thirdly, one should receive the eucharistic Lord with loving confidence

in prayerful thanksgiving and recollection

15. Which sacrament has been called, "a second baptism"? Why?

The sacrament of penance has been called a "second baptism" because through this sacrament sins are forgiven

16. What is the meaning of the term, "metanoia"?

Conversion from sin – to "turn away" from sin

17. What can invalidate the sacrament of penance?

if the purpose of amendment is lacking, the confession is invalid

18. Name the four effects of a worthy confession.

hunger and thirst for receiving sacramental absolution

grace is increased in us

the soul is filled with peace and consolation

greater lights are received concerning the ways of God

it increases considerably the powers of the soul

19. Since the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution and the revision of the Roman Ritual, the sacrament of has changed in what way?
the sacrament may be now administered as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from illness or old age.
20. In what does the sacrament of matrimony find its "crowning glory"?
the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring
21. Although lay members of the Church may not choose to become ordained priests, in what way may all the people of God constitute a priestly people?
[This is a discussion/personal reflection question.]
Intimately united with Christ as Head, the Church is an organic body that shares in the various functions of Christ as Priest, Prophet, and King
22. What are the four distinct values that St. Thomas assigned to prayer?
satisfactory, meritorious, a certain spiritual delight, and impetratory. (request or entreaty)
23. Reflect on the following and suggest ways in which the statement is not true: "God knows our needs better than we do; therefore, it seems unnecessary to give voice to our petitions. Moreover, God knows from the beginning what he will grant us and what he will not grant us; therefore, since we cannot change the immutable will of God, it is useless to pray."
[This is a discussion/personal reflection question.]
24. The text describes two ways in which prayer becomes difficult. What are they?
distractions and dryness
25. St. Thomas lists numerous ways in which we may become distracted in prayer. Give an example of each of the following: (personal reflections)
- a. *Constitutional factors*
 - b. *Physical or mental illness*
 - c. *Character Improper spiritual direction*
 - d. *The devil:*
 - e. *Unsuitable circumstances*

26. St. Thomas identifies other pitfalls to be avoided in one's prayer life. How many of these have you experienced?

a. *Purely mechanical recitation of vocal prayers and lifeless routine*

b. *Excessive personal effort, or undue passivity and inertia as if one should leave all to God alone.*

c. *Discouragement*

d. *Attachment to sensible consolation.*

e. *Persistence in the use of a particular method or the premature abandonment of a method.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Liturgy of the Hours

1174 The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist especially at the Sunday assembly, permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, "the divine office."⁴⁶ This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to "pray constantly," is "so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God."⁴⁷ In this "public prayer of the Church,"⁴⁸ the faithful (clergy, religious, and lay people) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized. Celebrated in "the form approved" by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father."⁴⁹ (2698)

1175 The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. In it Christ himself "continues his priestly work through his Church."⁵⁰ His members participate according to their own place in the Church and the circumstances of their lives: priests devoted to the pastoral ministry, because they are called to remain diligent in prayer and the service of the word; religious, by the charism of their consecrated lives; all the faithful as much as possible: "Pastors of souls should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and on the more solemn feasts. The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually."⁵¹

⁴⁶ Cf. SC, ch. IV, 83–101.

⁴⁷ SC 84; 1 Thess 5:17; Eph 6:18.

⁴⁸ SC 98.

⁴⁹ SC 84.

⁵⁰ SC 83.

⁵¹ SC 100; cf. 86; 96; 98; PO 5.

1176 The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours demands not only harmonizing the voice with the praying heart, but also a deeper “understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially of the Psalms.”⁵² (2700)

1177 The hymns and litanies of the Liturgy of the Hours integrate the prayer of the psalms into the age of the Church, expressing the symbolism of the time of day, the liturgical season, or the feast being celebrated. Moreover, the reading from the Word of God at each Hour (with the subsequent responses or *troparia*) and readings from the Fathers and spiritual masters at certain Hours, reveal more deeply the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, assist in understanding the psalms, and prepare for silent prayer. The *lectio divina*, where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration. (2586)

1178 The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather in a complementary way calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament. (1378)¹

IN BRIEF

1710 “Christ ... makes man fully manifest to man himself and brings to light his exalted vocation” (GS 22 § 1).

1711 Endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will, the human person is from his very conception ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude. He pursues his perfection in “seeking and loving what is true and good” (GS 15 § 2).

1712 In man, true freedom is an “outstanding manifestation of the divine image” (GS 17).

1713 Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him “to do what is good and avoid what is evil” (cf. GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience.

1714 Man, having been wounded in his nature by original sin, is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising his freedom.

1715 He who believes in Christ has new life in the Holy Spirit. The moral life, increased and brought to maturity in grace, is to reach its fulfillment in the glory of heaven.²

⁵² SC 90.

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed.) (304–305). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

GS Gaudium et spes

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² Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed.) (426). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

- 2797** Simple and faithful trust, humble and joyous assurance are the proper dispositions for one who prays the Our Father.
- 2798** We can invoke God as “Father” because the Son of God made man has revealed him to us. In this Son, through Baptism, we are incorporated and adopted as sons of God.
- 2799** The Lord’s Prayer brings us into communion with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. At the same time it reveals us to ourselves (cf. *GS* 22 § 1).
- 2800** Praying to our Father should develop in us the will to become like him and foster in us a humble and trusting heart.
- 2801** When we say “Our” Father, we are invoking the new covenant in Jesus Christ, communion with the Holy Trinity, and the divine love which spreads through the Church to encompass the world.
- 2802** “Who art in heaven” does not refer to a place but to God’s majesty and his presence in the hearts of the just. Heaven, the Father’s house, is the true homeland toward which we are heading and to which, already, we belong.²

IN BRIEF

- 2773** In response to his disciples’ request “Lord, teach us to pray” (*Lk* 11:1), Jesus entrusts them with the fundamental Christian prayer, the Our Father.
- 2774** “The Lord’s Prayer is truly the summary of the whole gospel,”²⁴ the “most perfect of prayers.”²⁵ It is at the center of the Scriptures.
- 2775** It is called “the Lord’s Prayer” because it comes to us from the Lord Jesus, the master and model of our prayer.
- 2776** The Lord’s Prayer is the quintessential prayer of the Church. It is an integral part of the major hours of the Divine Office and of the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Integrated into the Eucharist it reveals the eschatological character of its petitions, hoping for the Lord, “until he comes” (*1 Cor* 11:26).²

IN BRIEF

- 2857** In the Our Father, the object of the first three petitions is the glory of the Father: the sanctification of his name, the coming of the kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. The four others present our wants to him: they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.

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- 2858** By asking “hallowed be thy name” we enter into God’s plan, the sanctification of his name—revealed first to Moses and then in Jesus—by us and in us, in every nation and in each man.
- 2859** By the second petition, the Church looks first to Christ’s return and the final coming of the Reign of God. It also prays for the growth of the Kingdom of God in the “today” of our own lives.
- 2860** In the third petition, we ask our Father to unite our will to that of his Son, so as to fulfill his plan of salvation in the life of the world.
- 2861** In the fourth petition, by saying “give us,” we express in communion with our brethren our filial trust in our heavenly Father. “Our daily bread” refers to the earthly nourishment necessary to everyone for subsistence, and also to the Bread of Life: the Word of God and the Body of Christ. It is received in God’s “today,” as the indispensable, (super-) essential nourishment of the feast of the coming Kingdom anticipated in the Eucharist.
- 2862** The fifth petition begs God’s mercy for our offences, mercy which can penetrate our hearts only if we have learned to forgive our enemies, with the example and help of Christ.
- 2863** When we say “lead us not into temptation” we are asking God not to allow us to take the path that leads to sin. This petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength; it requests the grace of vigilance and final perseverance.
- 2864** In the last petition, “but deliver us from evil,” Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the “ruler of this world,” Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation.
- 2865** By the final “Amen,” we express our “fiat” concerning the seven petitions: “So be it.”²