

GOD IS EVERYTHING – “MY GOD AND MY ALL”

Have on hand: O.F.S. Rule and Catechism

In the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis* by Raphael Brown, O.F.S., we read about Bernard of Quintavalle choosing to learn more about Francis who had withstood for two years the abuse and insults of the townspeople toward him in his conversion: “Now the Lord Bernard of Assisi, who was one of the richest and wisest noblemen in the whole city, whose judgment everyone respected, wisely began to think over St. Francis’ utter contempt for the world and his great patience when he was insulted and the fact that although he had been scorned and despised by everybody for two years, he always appeared more serene and patient. He began to think and to say to himself: ‘This Francis certainly must have great graces from God.’

“So inspired by the Lord, he invited St. Francis to have supper with him one evening. The Saint humbly accepted and ate supper with him that evening.

“But the Lord Bernard secretly wished and planned to put St. Francis’ holiness to a test, so he invited him to sleep in his house that night.

“... Therefore St. Francis, who faithfully concealed the secrets of God, when he thought that the Lord Bernard was fast asleep, during the first part of the night, got out of bed and began to pray. Looking up to Heaven and raising his hands, he prayed with intense fervor and devotion, saying: ‘My God and my all!’ And he sobbed out those words with so many tears and kept repeating them with such devout persistence that until matins he said nothing but ‘My God and my all!’

“... Now the Lord Bernard saw the very inspiring actions of St. Francis by the light of the lamp burning there. And while he was attentively meditating on the words which the Saint was saying and carefully observing his devotion, he was touched by the Holy Spirit in the depths of his heart and felt inspired to change his life.”¹

The simple prayer of St. Francis is a good example of **contemplative prayer** – not the words themselves, but the fact that Francis is sharing his love with God in true intimacy. Francis marvels, he admires, he begs, he appreciates the God who has given him all things, and in fact, Francis realizes He is all that is needed or wanted. And in so doing, Francis places himself before God in the spirit of true humility and affection. Francis shares his heart with the Crucified. He realizes that God is his “everything.” You are encouraged in your time of praying to pray “**My God and My All,**” relishing each word for its rich meaning and content.

Someone should read from our *Rule*, Article #8.

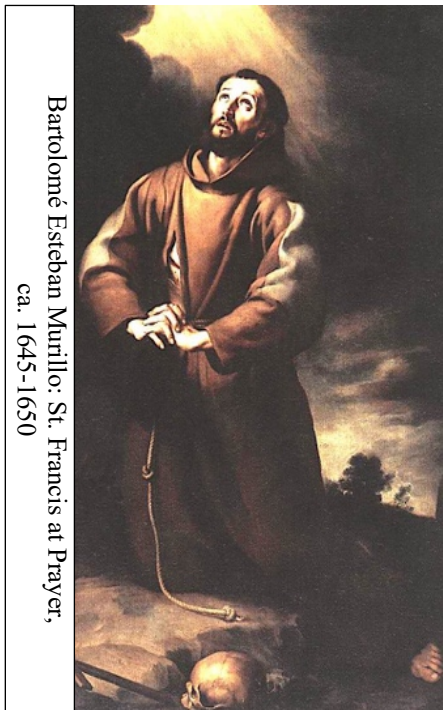
Q1. Do I ever use this prayer myself, as a Franciscan, as a basis for my meditation and contemplation? Might it be a good start into contemplation for me also? What other prayers of St. Francis might I start with?

Thomas of Celano tells us that St. Francis was the consummate contemplator: “The brothers who lived with him know that daily, constantly, talk of Jesus was always on his lips, sweet and pleasant conversations about Him, kind words full of love. Out of the fullness of the heart his mouth spoke. So the spring of radiant love that filled his heart within gushed forth. He was always with Jesus:



Cimabue: St. Francis fragment,
ca. 1278-1280

Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body. ... in rapture of spirit, he contemplated in unspeakable and incomprehensible glory the One sitting 'at the right hand of the Father.'"²



Ilia Delio, O.S.F. asserts that St. Francis understood well that true contemplation begins with a pure heart. "Contemplation is not some type of intellectual union of the mind with God but ... a deep penetrating vision of reality. That is why all those who seek God must, at some point in their lives, contemplate God. Those who strive for purity of heart never cease to adore God, and to see God and his work. When the heart is enlightened by knowledge, it encounters God by seeing the dimension of mystery present in everything, whose absolute center is God alone."³

Delio further observes that the progression of prayer in the life of St. Francis and of those who seek to follow his way leads to contemplation of the very Center of existence who is Christ himself. This movement "... begins with the gaze on the crucified Christ and continues to penetrate the depth of this reality until the one who gazes comes to see the heart of charity hidden in the heart of Christ. ... this love not only enables one to see more clearly and deeply into the depths of the Spouse, the heart of Christ, but to feel and taste the hidden sweetness of God."⁴

Delio offers us a final insight about the nature of Franciscan contemplation, that it is not directed toward heaven but rather toward the fullness of the Incarnation. She states, "To contemplate is to grow in love, not to become angelic but to grow in a depth of relationship of love."⁵

Contemplation is heart-to-heart sharing with God.

In §2709 of the *Catechism*, we are reminded that Christian prayer should include contemplation. And in §2716, "Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the 'Yes' of the Son become servant and the Fiat of God's lowly handmaid."

To be faithful to our Franciscan calling, we should seriously read and absorb the Church's message in §2709 – §2724. If there is time, become acquainted with the suggested passages in the *Catechism*.

Q2. As Franciscans, we professed to "let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do" (*Rule*, Article #8). As a Franciscan, how do I enter into contemplative prayer? How could I do more?

¹ *Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, R. Brown, 1958, pp. 42-43

² FA:ED, *The Life of Saint Francis, Second Book*, 1228-1229, Vol. I, pp. 283-284, Chapter IX

³ *Franciscan Prayer*, I. Delio, 2004, p. 109

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 127

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 138