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**“On that day, he will
know how to pray”**

Letter 81
Fr. Henri Caffarel
being present to God; Letters on Prayer
1983

A mother wrote to me: “I had gone into my little son’s room, to kiss him good night before he went to sleep. I put out the light and was about to leave, when he begged me in a distressed tone of voice: ‘Mommy, don’t go?’ I turned back and bent down over him: ‘Why, dear?’ ‘Because when you’re not there, I’m...I’m...poor.’ “

In my answer to her, I wrote:

I don’t know when a child’s words have made such a deep impression on me. Your Phillip’s words have stayed with me ever since I read them. He could have said: “I’m sad,” or even, “I’m afraid!” That would have been quite usual. Besides, sadness and fear quickly vanish. But, after searching for the word that was exactly right to express what he really felt, he said: “I’m poor.” That means so much more. A poor person is someone who lacks necessities, who needs bread and may die if he doesn’t get it. That’s just what your little boy felt so intensely that night. His mom was his daily bread, his reason for living. Without her, he was poor to the point of anguish.

May the day come, when he will be able to say to God with the same vigor and conviction, “Lord, don’t go away! Because when your not there, I’m poor.” On that day, he will know how to pray.