

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst” (Mt 5:6)

The road that leads to perfect union with God is a long one. Prayer alternates between desire and supplication, combat and fidelity. Little by little it is purified in patience and selflessness, until it becomes in its totality a pure desire for the glory of God.

The appetite for happiness, so deeply rooted in man’s heart, is one of the most powerful stimulants of our spiritual progress. Even so, far from fearing this appetite, we must allow it to be strengthened in mental prayer.

69 *Happiness*—Hunger for the absolute, akin to the appetite for happiness, combines with it to draw us toward God. It already witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

70 *This hunger for the absolute*—But on earth, our need for happiness and for the absolute cannot be fully satisfied. That is why our prayer is basically the supplication of exiles.

71 *The groanings of the Spirit*—This is a supplication vibrant with hope. Obviously, we cannot hope to see God here and now, but he invites us without further delay to an ever-growing intimacy with him.

72 *“Hope will not leave us disappointed”* (Rom 5:5)—In any event, our desire for God must be purified in patience. There is still too much “covetousness” in it.

73 *Prayer must be a fast before it becomes a feast*—Let us be on our guard against clinging more to the Lord’s gifts than to the Lord himself.

74 *The giver or the gifts?*—God permits “spiritual dryness” and “nights” precisely that our hope may be stripped of any alloys.

75 *Is it for nothing?*—This purification of the desire for God is in no sense its attenuation. The purer this desire, the more it becomes an insatiable thirst for the living God, a thirst which is vehemently expressed in the Psalms and in the writings of the great mystics.

76 *“Like parched land”* (Psalm 143:6)—Our desire for union with God will be granted some day. This union will be the work of agapé love, for its origin lies not in man’s heart, but in the heart of God.

77 *Begging from God*—This is the sign by which we can recognize the presence and the progress of the love of charity in us: when the desire for the Lord’s glory becomes the one and only motivating force of our whole spiritual life.

78 *The glory of God comes first.*