

FATHER CAFFAREL, A COMPANION ON OUR PATH TOWARDS GOD “BUT LOVE IS MY ESSENCE !”

DAY 8

Being Present for God in Intercessory Prayer “Intercede for Love of You and for Love of Humanity”

Into the breach

In the heat of the day, seated at the entrance of his tent, the Patriarch, looking up, sees Yahweh passing, accompanied by two angels. He rises, prostrates himself, and offers hospitality to the mysterious passer-by. The latter renews the promise of offspring to him and confides in him that he is going to judge them in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham then constitutes himself before God as the advocate of the criminal cities and his prayer, the first that we read in the Bible (Gen 18), is an intercession in favour of the guilty, an intercession confident, skilful, daring, pathetic. Abraham thus inaugurated the long line of intercessors who succeeded one another in Israel from age to age. [...]

To tell the truth, all these intercessors in our Bible are only figures, preliminary drafts of the great, of the only Intercessor: Jesus Christ. There He is, this man whom God is looking for: standing in the breach, with both arms outstretched, He intervenes. More effectively than Abraham, He pleads for the criminal world, and because He has united himself with human nature to the point of indissolubly attaching it to Himself in the Incarnation—and *Verbum caro factum est*—henceforth human nature is reconciled with the Father.

Once and for all Jesus Christ offered Himself; once and for all He restored the bridge between humanity and divinity. In a sense, his mission as an intercessor is complete. But it is also true to say that He wants to be present at every fraction of time and space, in order to continue his function of intercessor on earth, until the end of the centuries. And to do this He relies on us, his disciples. It is our turn to remain in the breach; it is up to us to watch. It is up to us to plead, for the immense crowd of men no doubt, but first and foremost for the portion of land, time, humanity where it is our mission, precisely, to embody Christ and to continue his intercession. [...]

The prayer of these intercessors is none other than the prayer of Christ himself, otherwise it would be nothing, it would not be. Christ's prayer sparked off in them by the Spirit of Christ. This Spirit, one of whose names is the Paraclete, which means: advocate, defender, intercessor. And no doubt the Holy Spirit pleads for those in whom He abides, but at the same time, in these people and through them, He intercedes for humanity.

What all these intercessors, under the impulse of the Spirit, ask for in their poor language of mankind on earth, the glorious Christ is at the right hand of the Father to translate it in heaven: For He is alive, the Lord risen, and, Saint John and Saint Paul tell us (1 John 2:1): (Heb 7:25): “*He never ceases to intercede for us.*”

Interceding is really one of the great words in the vocabulary of prayer; it is really a very high office: it testifies both to a great love of God and to a great love of mankind.

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