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Synod participants repeatedly expressed that the power of prayer provides comfort, healing, and direction in their lives. These fruits are evidence of an active prayer life, a life of communion with the Holy Trinity, and of covenantal love. Our hearts are made for love, for prayer, and for God, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) reminds us:

"The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place 'to which I withdraw.' The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant." (CCC 2563)

As Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, we are required to spend one hour in silent prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in our chapels every day. Our Constitutions notes, "We actively participate in the Eucharist every day. We are nourished with the body and blood of Christ and have daily adoration before the Blessed Sacrament." Our love for God must be shown in our readiness to look for moments of intimacy with Him, just He and me, despite all the serious responsibilities we have. In fact, if we find ourselves too busy, it is a good sign that we need more quiet time with Jesus. And this is not simply true for busy religious sisters, but for all Catholics.

I certainly understand that not every Catholic can afford to make a Eucharistic Holy Hour each day like religious sisters do; however, each Catholic should be able to set aside at least ten faithful minutes of prayer. In fact, those who participated in the Synod requested more opportunities for prayer, especially in adoration, rosaries, scripture study and retreats, diving deeper into the heart of Jesus.

Time spent with Jesus in prayer, sometimes experiencing delightful fervor and other times in total dryness, is often seen as “time wasted” by our secular world. But our faith tells us that it is in fact the most fruitful time of our day since it is a time spent “in love”; loving Jesus, which flows out to loving our brothers and sisters, and even our enemies. It is a time in which we intercede for everyone who needs our prayers, those whom we know and whose needs have been made known to us, and those whom we will only know in heaven.

Moreover, although our time spent in prayer is certainly of benefit to us and our salvation, our prayer life should also lead us out of ourselves to serve our brothers and sisters in need. As we are told at the end of every Mass, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” or “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,” our prayer should lead to action, to us being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. We do not want a single person to be lost and separated from the Father, because such loss and separation pierces the heart of Him whom we love!

Every first Friday of the month, our community engages in an activity we call “Emmaus.” It is “street evangelization.” Jesus is exposed in the Blessed Sacrament and we sisters take turns adoring Jesus and playing praise and worship music, while a third group is on the streets inviting people who walk past the Church to come in and light a candle to Jesus. It is amazing what 10 seconds in front of the One who loves us can do in the heart of a person. We have been witnesses to so many graces bestowed upon our own hearts and upon the hearts of those who just come in, sometimes in a rush, to light a candle. The power of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is truly amazing!

Prayer and ministry must go hand in hand. We cannot give if we have not first received. Our prayer changes us, and then leads us to mission as disciples of Christ who have been sent in the power of the Holy Spirit to work in the Lord’s vineyard. And then back to the chapel. And then back to mission.

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