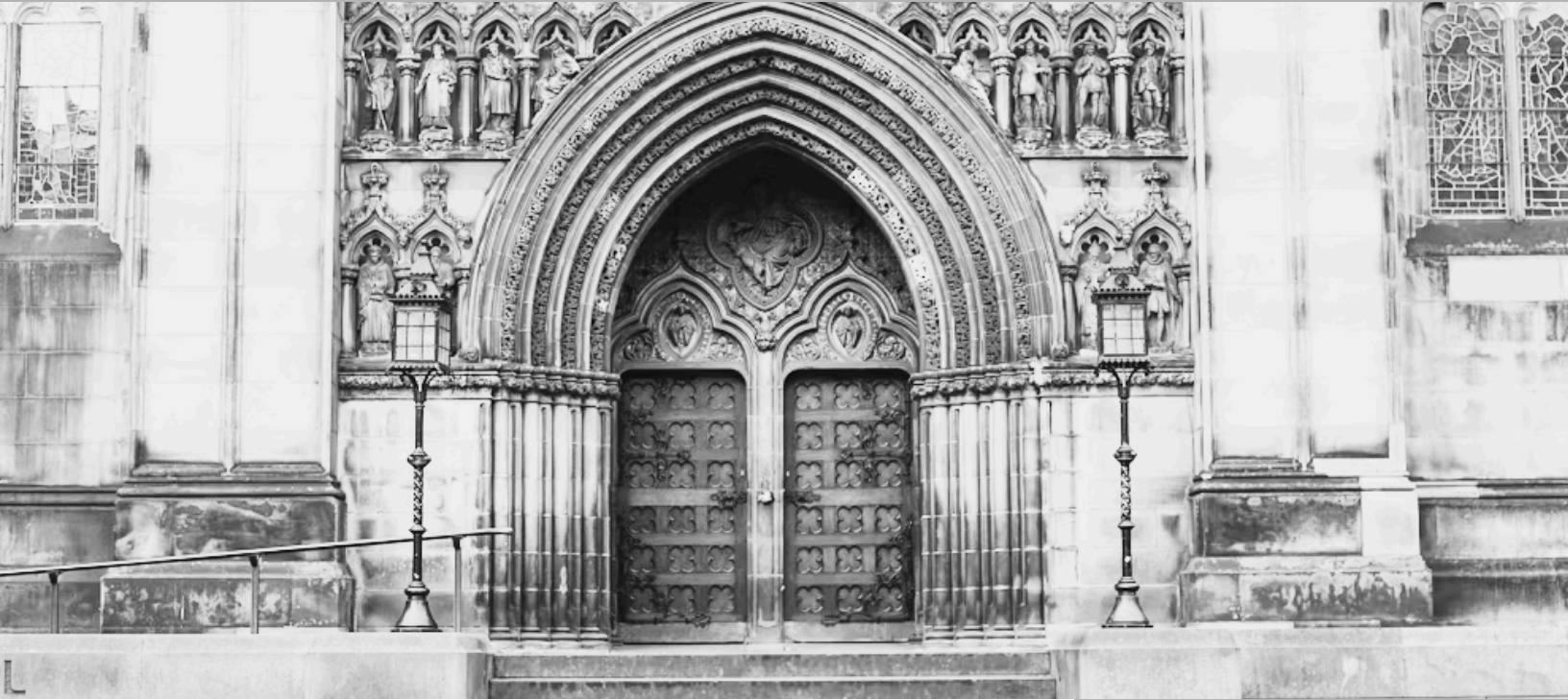


POPE LEO XIV

SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM



August 5, 2026

5. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

In this catechism, we will resume our reflection on the Conciliar Constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC). Today we will look at the ecclesial dimension of liturgical prayer.

As the Apostle Paul suggests, it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray. From the day of Pentecost, the Spirit dwells in the Church, inspiring every one of her activities and, in particular, prayer. The life of the first community, born in Jerusalem after the Pasch of Jesus, is life in the Spirit given by the

risen Lord. “From that time onwards the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things ‘which were in all the scriptures concerning him’ (Lk 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which ‘the victory and triumph of his death are again made present’, and at the same time giving thanks ‘to God for his unspeakable gift’ (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ Jesus, ‘in praise of his glory’ (Eph. 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit” (SC, 6).

In our time, in contexts dominated by an efficiency-driven and consumerist mindset, prayer may seem pointless and trivial. In a world where science and technology claim to provide all the answers, praying may appear to be a form of escapism.

*At the beginning
of August, Pope
Leo XIV
reflected on the
Prayer of the
Church, chapter
five of
Sacrosanctum
Concilium.*

Furthermore, even in many Christian families, the tradition of prayer is no longer passed on, whilst many people risk confusing it with just another technique, of a psychological nature aimed at personal well-being. Prayer, however, as a fundamental dimension of our humanity, is worth rediscovering in its true form.

The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* took this need seriously. This greatly pleased Pope Saint Paul VI, who, on promulgating this first document approved by the Second Vatican Council, stated: “God comes first; prayer is our primary duty; the liturgy is the primary source of the divine life communicated to us, the primary school of our spiritual life” (Address, Saint Peter’s Basilica, 4 December 1963).

Indeed, in the Constitution, the term “prayer” designates the liturgy as a whole. This perspective is decisive, for it guided the liturgical reform, making the active participation of the faithful its central pillar. The liturgy is presented first and foremost as the place of encounter, of God’s initiative in drawing near to humanity in his Son, “the Word made flesh, anointed by the Holy Spirit” (SC, 5), to whom we may respond “through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit”, that is to say, thanks to “the very prayer which Christ Himself, together with His Body, addresses to the Father” (SC, 84).

For this reason, Saint Paul VI ardently desired that the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church’s daily public prayer, inseparable from the Eucharist, might deeply permeate, enliven, guide and express all Christian prayer, and effectively nourish the spiritual life of the People

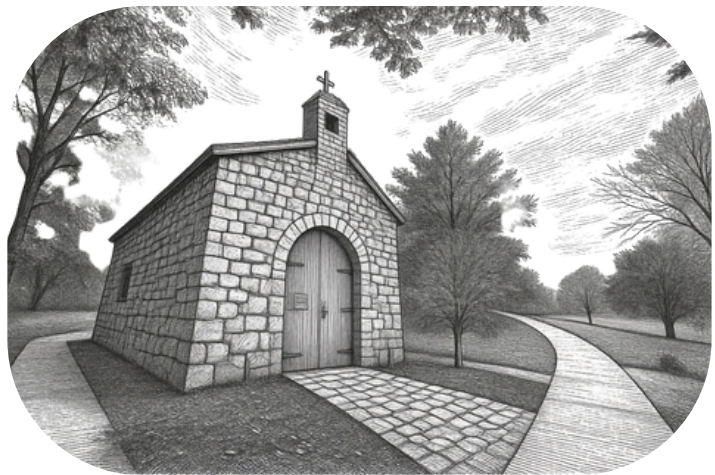
of God (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Laudis canticum*).

For this desire to be fulfilled, the Liturgy of the Hours needs to be more fully embraced and lived out in the daily lives of the baptized and of the communities. To the many people who wish to learn to pray, especially catechumens, it can offer the path and the school of Christian prayer.

Every week and every day, the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours are the breath of the life of the Church, which makes the Holy Spirit circulate through her Body. In this prayer, Christ “joins the entire community of mankind to Himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise” (SC, 83). In this way, day by day, we are ever more united with the Paschal Mystery

for us, as our Priest; He prays in us, as our Head; He is prayed to by us, as our God. Let us therefore recognize in Him our words, and His words in us” (Enarr. in psalmum LXXXVI: PL 37, 1081).

Bound to the Eucharist, whose light it prolongs, the Liturgy of the Hours sanctifies the time of our daily lives: in the morning, we begin the day with faith and gratitude; at midday, we ask for the strength to remain faithful amidst our labours; in the evening, once our work is done, Vespers accompany the moment of sunset; at night, we fall asleep entrusting ourselves to God’s peace. Each Hour is an act of hope: during our earthly pilgrimage, we keep watch, awaiting with the whole



and conformed to him.

Saint Augustine affirms that “When we speak to God in prayer for mercy, we do not separate the Son from Him; and when the Body of the Son prays, it separates not its Head from itself: and it is one Saviour of His Body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who both prays for us, and prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays

Church the glorious return of the Lord.