



Conference

Communicator

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A Prayer of Wheat: the Foundation of the TEC Movement

Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz OMI reflects on the theme for the 2008 TEC Congress



A LIFE OF PRAYER: Archbishop Schwietz is pictured here with his fellow Oblates at a celebration marking his upcoming 40th ordination anniversary on Dec. 20. (Photo from Oblates of Mary Immaculate)

The theme for next year's TEC Congress, "A Prayer of Wheat" is taken from the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24: *"Whoever wishes to come after me, must deny himself."* This theme--which is so central to the Charism of TEC-- calls to mind what Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his recent book, *Jesus of Nazareth*.

In chapter five, reflecting on the Lord's Prayer, the Pope wrote: *"In order to mature, in order to make real progress on the path leading from a superficial piety into profound oneness with God's will, man needs to be tried. Just as the juice of the grape has to ferment in order to become a fine wine, so too man needs purifications and transformations. They are dangerous for him, because they present an opportunity for him to fall, and yet they are indispensable as paths on which he comes to himself and to God. Love is always a process involving purifications, renunciations and painful transformations of ourselves -- and that is how it is a journey to maturity"* (ref. pg. 162).

The Pope could well be writing about the dynamic of TEC: living out the Paschal Mystery. This process upon which we embark in following Jesus is not simply to embrace suffering--it is meant to lead us along the path of growth in love.

God's love growing in our hearts is what we are all about. Often the occasions of dying to self are not sought -- they arrive on their own. When life brings us pain and suffering, we in faith can embrace them as sharing in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Offered to Him, they can become graces. At other times, however, we can embrace intentional occasions as practices of self-denial for the sake of a greater good. The spiritual fruit of these endeavors may be directed to the benefit of others, but we ourselves grow in the spiritual maturity Pope Benedict referred to. **Prayer in all its forms, when intentional, sincere and fervent, is a central dynamic for the TEC disciple. It requires a true dying to self and is a good practice both in our life as disciples of Christ and in preparing for the 2008 Congress.** Some of the self-discipline (dying) required:

- It takes discipline to set aside time for prayer. We are all so busy, but in the long run we have to ask, what is really important?
- A good prayer life needs preparation: reading good books, Scripture, watching decent programs, or listening to inspiring talks.
- A good prayer life also requires the self-denial of avoiding reading, seeing, or listening to whatever diminishes our spiritual life. It is simply false to claim that highly secularized, sexualized and violent material does not affect us.

So I invite us to become ever more intentional people of prayer as we live out our discipleship of Jesus. In this way, I think, we will become more and more, a people of the Paschal Mystery.

Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz, OMI
TEC Episcopal Moderator

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