

From Father John: *"Lord, listen to my prayer and let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me: whenever I am troubled, turn to me and hear me. Whenever I call on you, hurry to answer me."* (Psalm 101)



St. Paul teaches us in his letter to the Romans that we should not conform ourselves to the things of the world or to worldly desires. *"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."* (Rom 12:2) Our Lord Jesus calls us to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect, *"So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."* (Matt 5:48)

When the word perfect (or perfection) is used in sacred scripture or in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, what is meant by the word perfect is holiness. As Catholic Christians, we are called to holiness, to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. We grow in holiness by practicing our faith. We become more like Christ by practicing our faith. The practice of our faith includes daily prayer, scripture readings, receiving the sacraments as often as possible, going out into the world and bringing Christ Jesus to the people we encounter, examining our consciences as we work to overcome our fallen human nature, and following the way of life that our Lord Jesus calls us to in the gospels.

St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote a treatise on *Christian Perfection*. In it he makes the argument that Christ should be manifest in our whole life which will then lead us to perfection. I thought I would include part of it here because it gives us insight into what we can do to grow in holiness.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

From St. Gregory of Nyssa

“The life of the Christian has three distinguishing aspects: deeds, words and thought. Thought comes first, then words, since our words express openly the interior conclusions of the mind. Finally, after thoughts and words, comes action, for our deeds carry out what the mind has conceived. So when one of these results in our acting or speaking or thinking, we must make sure that all our thoughts, words and deeds are controlled by the divine ideal, the revelation of Christ. For then our thoughts, words and deeds will not fall short of the nobility of their implications.

What then must we do, we who have been found worthy of the name of Christ? Each of us must examine his thoughts, words and deeds, to see whether they are directed towards Christ or are turned away from him. This examination is carried out in various ways. Our deeds or our thoughts or our words are not in harmony with Christ if they issue from passion. They then bear the mark of the enemy who smears the pearl of the heart with the slime of passion, dimming and even destroying the luster of the precious stone.

On the other hand, if they are free from and untainted by every passionate inclination, they are directed towards Christ, the author and source of peace. He is like a pure, untainted stream. If you draw from him the thoughts in your mind and the inclinations of your heart, you will show a likeness to Christ, your source and origin, as the gleaming water in a jar resembles the flowing water from which it was obtained.

For the purity of Christ and the purity that is manifest in our hearts are identical. Christ’s purity, however, is the fountainhead; ours has its source in him and flows out of him. Our life is stamped with the beauty of his thought. The inner and the outer man are harmonized in a kind of music. The mind of Christ is the controlling influence that inspires us to moderation and goodness in our behavior. As I see it, Christian perfection consists in this: sharing the titles which express the meaning of Christ’s name, we bring out this meaning in our minds, our prayers and our way of life.”