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## **Introduction, by Fr. Henri Caffarel**

**Fr. Henri Caffarel**

**being present to God; Letters on Prayer  
1983**

Vatican II vigorously reminded the laity of the Gospel's demand that they be "present to the world." And yet—as has not always been sufficiently noted—it exhorted them with equal vigor to begin by becoming "present to God." Indeed, what would a "presence to the world" amount to by witnesses who have not been in close contact with the One about whom they are to witness, by spokesman who do not listen to the One whose message they are to transmit, by laborers who do not follow the foreman's commands?

It is essentially during prayer that presence to God comes about. I am speaking of prayer that is first of all adoration and self-offering. That is why it has never been more urgent than now to initiate Christians into prayer and help them to pray, at a time when they are attaining a clearer awareness of their apostolic vocation and of their earthly tasks.

Such is the reason for this book of nearly a hundred letters on prayer. Most of them have already appeared in the Cahiers sur l'oraison. I have regrouped them into ten chapters, focusing on ten fundamental themes.

I beg the reader not to approach this book as if it were a treatise on prayer! If he did, he would be disappointed. These pages do not

claim to say everything there is to say on the subject, and they were not written with the rigorous logic of a manual. They are a kind of a directed exchange of views. In answer to a wide variety of spontaneous questions, they offer answers, using the familiar tone of conversation. The fact remains that a broad theology of prayer underlies these pages, as well as the experience of men and women of prayer, which has enriched Christian tradition over the centuries.

These texts should not be read one after the other in rapid succession. That would be to miss their message. The author's hope is that his readers will read no more than one letter a day, and that this letter be made the object of meditation and seen as an invitation to enter into God's intimate friendship.

There is no need to follow the order in which the letters are presented. It is for the reader to make his own selection as the need arises, with the help of the introductions that precede each chapter, presenting the theme of the letters in that chapter.

Above all, the reader should not read on when he feels drawn to interior silence. The Holy Spirit is the only true master of prayer. When he calls us from within, we must leave everything and listen attentively.