

NOVENA TO THE BLESSED SARA SALKHAZI

Along the path of love with Sr. Sara Salkhazi

1. FREEDOM FROM ATTACHMENTS

From Sr. Sara's Diary

It is possible that sometimes it is a really small, petty and really prosaic thing that ties me down. I must not laugh this off. I must not say that these are such trifles that they do not deserve a word in spiritual life...Let me take these away from myself, even if it hurts a wee, wee bit so I may cling to this: Renounce it! Let me be free from everything, not just from great things but let me be free above all from trifles!

How many times and how intensively temptations come upon me especially lately. How often I cannot withstand temptations to smoke, how often I have compromised in thought! You see how helpless, weak and fallible I am! See, in thought I like hardness so much, the hard life, and in reality I am so soft, softened, gluttonous, comfort-loving and self-loving! My Christ, be patient with me: do not withdraw your grace from me because I am like this! I promise you that I will do everything to fulfill your wish! Help me! If I progress slowly, overlook it! Do not look at the result which is practically nothing but at the effort it cost me! Be patient and slowly I will become as you desire me!

Meditation

As we travel the path to greater love with Sr. Sara, we will come upon similar obstacles which will often restrict our freedom, and will thus prevent us from doing deeds that arise from love. Sr. Sara knows that she may open before the loving God all the darkness that she perceives in her soul and that she may entrust herself to the Lord's help. Besides this she puts in human effort and determination.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you thanks for being the kind of God who will accept me with my faults, and who will even embrace me with understanding and with love. I ask you to make me freer to practice love, and grant that with a willing heart I may be able to live with this freedom!

2. STRUGGLE WITH MYSELF

From Sr. Sara's Diary

Yes, I desire to lose myself totally so that I may find and own myself completely, my Jesus. I will think a lot about what those obstacles are that prevent me from losing myself. I know that when I dislike something and do not do it willingly, that is an obstacle to my dying to myself. I will try to call this to mind whenever I encounter something like this!

Much diligent work of mine has been ruined because my desire was: Let me be seen, let me be valued, let me be praised! Oh my Lord, how will I be able to account for this? Help, help, my God, my Lord!

Meditation

Sometimes on our path with Sr. Sara we meet with harder trials with interior obstacles than with our attachment to created goods. Sr. Sara does not struggle with theses for the sake of her own

practice of virtue. Her big aim, what floats before her eyes, is possessing God. For this no sacrifice is too costly.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, it is so good that in your love you call me only to those things necessary for me to grow in your love and for your Kingdom to be built. I ask you to be with me in my interior struggles and to fashion my soul totally in accordance with your desire.

3. PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

From Sr. Sara's Diary

Sweet Jesus, I would like to be able to think of you a lot during the day. I would like not just to live for you and work for you but would like to fly to you with thoughts in prayer ejaculations. To be completely recollected in prayer. Today I will be very careful about how I say my prayers.

From now on I will try to be grateful. Every evening I will try to move myself to gratitude. For at least a few moments I will rest on Christ's heart and in a word or two but with all my heart I will thank him for the goods of the day! I will try to set up my life in such a way that it praises God in a loud voice!

Meditation

On the way with Sr. Sara in prayer, let us be nourished and gather new momentum. Sr. Sara knew that the rhythm of daily prayers provides a healthy framework and lasting strength for a life with God- but she longed more for God to be satisfied with this. She asks Jesus that during the day she may also frequently lift up her heart to him.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gift of prayer. I thank you for being always present in my life history and that I may always speak to you. Grant that I may have a taste for prayer and that I may become ever more deeply a person of prayer.

4. SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD

From Sr. Sara's Diary

In the depths of the smallest, most trifling things it is possible to find God's Will. My Father's Will. How good that it is so! The Father always desires what is best. Even when it is sometimes not understandable and difficult, he desires the best.

To be ready at every moment to do the Will of God. Every moment.... Always....Constantly! Not when it pleases me, not when it is good for me, but always to be ready.

O my God, I do not desire any will other than yours! Carry me in your hands as you would carry a child. I give you thanks, my Lord.

Meditation

Prayer slowly transforms one's way of seeing things as it transformed that of Sr. Sara's and ours with her. We will see what the Will of God is, that for the fulfillment of which we so often pray. The Will of God is only good. If we have not experienced that, it is only because of the imperfection of human vision. *(silence)*

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you thanks for showing us the Father and for having taught us a prayer for his will. We thank you for the Holy Spirit you have poured out on us who works in us when we pray. I ask that with the Holy Spirit you fashion my way of seeing things and my understanding. Fill me with a burning desire for God's Will!

5. FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

From Sr. Sara's Diary

To be cheerful when I am happy is not hard. To be cheerful when my heart is in pain, when all my nerves would like to mourn is what is hard!

When I feel that nervousness and bad humour begins to spread, I immediately try to cast it out of myself and to become good-humoured. I will sing something. During the day I will try more often to move myself to gratitude.

I will do the smallest deed, the smallest worship, the service of God.

To love when I am loved, when my soul is full of feeling...is nothing! To love when that is hard, perhaps when my heart has a complaint, when they push me away! That is what God needs! That's what I will try, what I wish to begin, because even if I stumble it will still succeed! God give me grace and with that one has to work.

Meditation

In every person who walks the way of union with God in prayer as Sr. Sara did, spirituality will be formed which Sisters of Social Service refer to as being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is a special, supernatural longing and striving which the Holy Spirit pours into a person: to always live in the joy of loving God even when circumstances don't exactly promote that. At every moment we can live the happiness of the children of God for: He who did not spare his Son but gave him over for us, how will he not give us everything with him? (Rom 8,32).

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you thanks for you unfathomable goodness which renews the whole world and my soul within it. I long to always rejoice in you and thus respond to your love. I ask you to build this up in me!

6. TO LOVE THE POOR

From Sr. Sara's Diary

In general I would like to sanctify my chilliness. Virgin Mother, grant that I may offer this up for those who have no heater and no warm clothes! Not to complain, not to cry, not to whine but to turn with unspeakable gratitude towards God that I have everything! May he be blessed for that! I made 15 studies of living conditions. We were in terrible places. I have not yet seen such misery. And what is worse, the misery or the sin in which they live? Is it possible that in such dirty, messy circumstances one can live with a pure interior? Oh yes, yes: poverty is bearable and does not distance one from God but misery kills body and soul! God truly tries those peoples with a serious unspeakable cross. But if from at least one mouth a prayer would rise! But that's how, poor, poor people. There they live in filth and bodily and spiritual dirt and have no idea of the beauty of God and don't even know that Christ has died for them, loves them and seeks them....

Meditation

The hearts of persons walking the way of love gradually get to resemble Christ and love radiates from them; the love of God for the poor, seeing as God sees, with seeing from the viewpoint of the poor as important. Sr. Sara works for the poor but above all else she does everything required of her: she is in solidarity with them and with all solutions she prays to God for them.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you thanks that you watch over the world and every person in it, especially over the lot of the poor. I ask you to have mercy on the world! Show me what I can do for the poor and make my heart ready to follow your inspirations!

7. TO LOVE DIFFICULT PEOPLE

From Sr. Sara's Diary

Love is very good only sometimes it is hard to love. Now also. A person is choosy. Sweet Jesus, help! Let everything be yours. Grant that I may be able to love fully and unconditionally, so that no one is a "stranger" to me.

I have to love there where it is hard. That is receiving interest on loving. Where it is easy, it is easy to seek myself. But where it is hard, there is Christ. I desire to love!

Today I will examine myself from this viewpoint: how do I love those who are hard to love, how is my adjustment to them?

Last year I agonized so much because it was so hard to bear some people. Then I did something that was like magic that seemed to completely wipe out my antipathy. Whenever I met the person concerned, I immediately said an ejaculatory prayer for them. Only: "Jesus, help". "Bless". And that is very good. This must never be omitted!

Is it hard for me to love? What is hard about it? Perhaps I am difficult for the other? It is a burden to the other also and I have to bear her burden. I have to help her!

Meditation

The flood of love does not stop even when there are large obstacles in its way. Urged by Christ's love and the resourcefulness of the Holy Spirit in her heart, Sr. Sara seeks creative ways to love those who are harder to love, like the poor in their environment. With human shrewdness she tries to alter her understanding and entreats Christ to alter her heart.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we praise you because you are victorious love. We thank you for having the power to transform my heart. I ask you to grant that for your sake I may love those whom you love since you made them for yourself!

8. SPOUSAL LOVE TOWARDS CHRIST

From Sr. Sara's Diary

You have bound me to yourself and I am not able and do not desire to be separated from you...! I desire to be separated from everything and everyone. Jesus, help me in this desire! Yours, yours, I desire to be yours! To live for you, to die for you, to work for you and to work with you. Amen, amen, amen!

You have called me to great light by: vocation, to the light of Christ as spouse, to that wonderful light which is wonderful also because he allows that although living in this great light, a dark season also falls on me! Lord what do you want with this light? What do you want with this darkness? You called me into light and yet you allow darkness to fall on me. Light and shadow, bless the Lord!

Meditation

Sr. Sara's special gift from God was her religious vocation, which to a Sister of Social Service means a spousal connection with Christ, humanly realized and lived as Sr. Sara also lived it. But each of us who are the people of God is called to having the heart filled with God's love in our own personal way: so that with Jesus and for Jesus we live and die.

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I thank you for the personal love you have showered on me in which my life is fulfilled. I ask you to carry through to the end your work in me. Realize the dream you have of me!

9. SACRIFICING ONE'S LIFE

From Sr. Sara's Diary

I desire to be awake, with a burning candle, the fire of love in my hand and in my heart. Today again I want to give the whole day, every hour, and every minute to Christ. May your love, Christ, pursue, drive, urge, send, work and flame in me until death and forever. Amen. Alleluia!

Where you lead, I want to follow. With joy, happily, readily, freely.....may your will rule in me! If we are united to Christ we share his lot. Christ's victory over death is the victory of us all. Suffering does not mean darkness or somberness. The place in which we suffer is not far from the place from where we will rise.

O sweet Jesus, with complete peace and readiness I accept now the death you desire for me with all its agonies, pains and sufferings. Amen. (An excerpt from her prayer of self-offering).

Meditation

God carried out the work to which Sr. Sara freely said yes. She learned from her spouse the happiness of a self-giving life; from Jesus, whom the Father sent that we should not be lost but that we should have eternal life at the price of his blood. Let us also cover our weekdays with the light of eternal life and see in our sufferings the cross of Christ and his love!

(silence)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I praise you for your martyrs, among them especially now for Sr. Sara! I praise you for your greatness, the greatness of your love which is revealed in martyrdom! Have mercy on me, Lord, so that I also may fully accept and take in your love!

We walk on the same path with Blessed Sr. Sara: the road toward fullness of love. We wander over the same landscape, carved out of the same material. Let us learn from her, our Sister who went before us, how she crossed more difficult places and periods of life. As we quickly notice, in every situation she asked help and solutions from God while working at matters with all her strength at the same time. During the novena let us try first to see how Sr. Sara worked with the Lord, or more exactly how the Lord worked with Sr. Sara in tearing down obstacles to love; and afterwards let us marvel at the unwrapping of ever growing characteristics of love. We know, of course, that in reality all this happened according to the wisdom of God, not strictly one thing after another, each step followed by the next as our novena structure forces us to do. For "God's foolishness is wiser than man's" (1 Cor. 1,25). "How great is the richness, the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How incomprehensible are his judgements and his ways. Because everything is from him and through him and for him. Glory to him forever. Amen." (Rom. 11,33.36)

Translated by Sister Gabriella Petoniak, SSS on September 8, 2006