

Welcome address

Your Eminence!

Venerable fathers, dear conference participants!

I would like to cordially welcome all of you who have gathered to discuss issues of Church care for mentally ill people and, in particular, the impact of religious mystical experience on man's psyche.

The purpose of psychiatry is a person's mental health, which in the most general terms implies freedom of the psyche from morbid manifestations, relatively peaceful state of mind and calmness, and the ability to overcome various stresses.

Christian pastors are also called to help a person achieve inner peace, which in Biblical terms is called peace of Christ that frees a person from confusion and passions, and fills the soul with love and joy. A person may be caught in the most distressing and painful external circumstances, but they do not have power over him or her.

The task of Christian pastoral psychiatry, which is designed to open the soul of the patient to the healing power of the Creator, His grace, served in the Sacraments of the Church, is to help a person on the path of acquiring the world of Christ. The psyche is fraught with a lot of mysterious and unknown, so human resources are not always enough for effective treatment of mental disorders. But we hope that what is impossible to man is possible to God (Lk. 18: 27).

I pray for your fruitful work. May our Heavenly Doctor support you in caring for our mentally ill brothers and sisters.

Priest Gabino Uríbarri Bilbao

Was Jesus a Mystic?

1. Was Jesus a Mystic?

(1) If we were to affirm that Jesus was or was not a mystic, this argument would rely on the idea of a mystic that we have¹. I would like to start this paper clearly stating the understanding of a mystic that I will work from. I shall follow the catholic theologian Karl Rahner. In a very famous essay, he states: «the Christian of the future will be a mystic, this means,

¹ In this essay I gather ideas from my book: G. Uríbarri, *La mística de Jesús. Desafío y propuesta* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2017).

someone who has experienced something, or he will not be a Christian»². In light of this formulation, I will consider a mystic one who lives a personal encounter with God and who has a deep personal experience of God. To be even more precise, a mystic is a person who has been touched in his or her life by the real and profound mystery of God.

(2) Given this understanding of a mystic, can we consider Jesus a mystic? Without a doubt yes; we can and must do so. If we look at the best testimonies we have of Jesus Christ's life, the canonical Gospels, there we find two major elements that support our argument. First of all, the Gospels explicitly point out that Jesus prayed in several moments of his life. For instance, there are the following well-known scenes in which Jesus appears praying: the scene of the agony in the garden of the olive trees (Mk 14: 36 and par.; Heb 5: 7), the exclamation of jubilation (Lk 10: 21-22), and the more indirect scene of his teaching the Our Father (Mt 6: 9-13 and par.). In addition, the Gospels confirm his custom of retiring early to pray or of spending long periods in prayer (e.g. Mk 1: 35; 6: 46; Lk 5: 16), as seen in the prayer before the election of the disciples (Lk 6: 12-13). The evangelical texts also report his prayer before some miracles such as the multiplication of the loaves (e.g. Mk 6: 41; 8: 6) or the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11: 41-42), as well as the prayer on the cross (Mt 27: 46; Mk 15: 38; Lk 23: 46; Jn 19: 28), and the so-called priestly prayer (Jn 17). Consequently, we can consider Jesus as a man of prayer.

Secondly, we might ask ourselves: what happened during this prayer? We must acknowledge that we would like to have more information than we have. Nevertheless, we get a good hint as to Jesus' intimacy with God in prayer by way of the content of his prayer and its impact in his life. The content of his prayer is frequently thanksgiving (e.g.: Mk 8: 6 y par.: Mt 15,36; Jn 6: 11. 23; 11: 41-42; 1Cor 11: 23-24 and Lk 22: 19; Mt 26: 27 and Mk 14,23; Lk 22,17) and blessing God (e.g.: Mk 8: 7; Lk 9: 16; Mt 26: 27 and Mk 14: 23)³. In an even clearer indication of the content of his prayer, we have the scene before the crucifixion in the garden of Gethsemane, in which he uttered these words: «“Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt”» (Mk 14: 36). Here, where the window of Jesus' relation with the Father is slightly opened, we grasp from a distance its depth and intimacy, its tenderness and openness. We receive the confirmation, that in fact Jesus' life really was touched and guided by the mystery of God, and that God was present in his life, transparent to his

² K. Rahner, «Espiritualidad antigua y actual», in Id., *Escritos de Teología VII* (Madrid: Taurus, 1969), 13-135, here 15.

³ Cf. A. Vanhoye, *Jesús, modelo de oración* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2014).

conscience⁴.

The impact of prayer in his life is suggested through his obedience to the will of the Father. The whole life of Jesus can be understood as obedience to his Father: «“My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work”» (Jn 4: 34; cf. Jn 5: 30; 6: 38; Rm 5: 19; Philp 2: 8; Heb 5: 8; 10: 9-10). The union with his Father through the Holy Spirit is the thread of his life, his action, his teaching, his options.

To conclude, we are right when we affirm that Jesus was a mystic in the sense that he did have a real experience of a deep encounter with God, that he was touched, in his humanity, by the real and profound mystery of God. Does this statement agree with Christological dogma? Let us take a look.

2. Jesus as a mystic in the frame of christological dogma

When I speak of Jesus' mysticism or of Jesus as a mystic I am always speaking about his humanity. That his human nature had a real experience of the mystery of God can be defended by at least three reasons, gathered from the best of patristic theology.

(1) According to Irenaeus of Lyon, in the scene of Jesus' baptism (cf. Mk 1: 9-11 and par.), at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit. This anointing fell upon his humanity⁵. Through the anointing of the Spirit, the humanity of Christ started his messianic and filial ministry, which the next scene, the temptations (cf. Mk 1: 12-13 and par.) confirm. This means, then, that it was through the guidance and strength provided by the Holy Spirit over his humanity that Jesus Christ accomplished his work of salvation. We can presuppose as a theological and spiritual reading, without fear of making an extreme judgment, that this anointing of the Spirit on the humanity of Jesus implies a true, real, continuous and profound experience of connection with God in his mystery.

(2) The First Council of Constantinople condemned the position of Apollinaire of Laodicea (cf. DH⁶ 151). It is well known, that Apollinaire rejected the presence of a human soul in the incarnate Word of God. The condemnation of Apollinaire himself and all derivations of Apollinarism means that we must defend the presence and activity in Jesus Christ of a

⁴ This is a main point in Joseph Ratzinger's book, *Jesus of Nazareth*. See G. Uríbarri, «La oración de Jesús según J. Ratzinger, teólogo y papa. Líneas maestras de una cristología espiritual», *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 91 (2016) 363-390.

⁵ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adv. Haer.* III, 9,6 (SCh 211, 206-208); III, 9,3 (SCh 211, 110s); III, 17,1 (SCh 211, 330); III, 18,7 (SCh 211, 364-370); IV, 14,2 (SCh 100, 542-544). See, for instance: A. Orbe, *La unción del Verbo. Estudios Valentinianos III* (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1961); L. F. Ladaria, *Jesús y el Espíritu: la unción* (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2013).

⁶ H. Denzinger - P. Hünermann, *El magisterio de la Iglesia. Enchiridion Symbolorum et Declarationum de rebus Fidei et Morum* (Barcelona: Herder, 1999).

human soul, i.e.: a human intellect (*noûs*), a human will (*thélema*), and so on. This represents the main trend of patristic Christology, as for instance seen in Gregory of Nazianzus's rejection of Apollinaire's position⁷.

(3) With Maximus Confessor⁸, the first Lateran Synod (year 640; cf. DH 500), and the third Council of Constantinople (year 680-681; cf. DH 555-556) state the presence and the activity of a human will in Jesus Christ. This human will, was active in the obedience to the will of the Father. Through this human will Jesus Christ accomplished the work of salvation.

So, to summarize, the human will (against Apollinaire and with Gregory of Nazianzus), anointed by the Holy Spirit (Irenaeus) was really active in the work of salvation (Maximus Confessor). This means, the humanity of Christ, because of the intimate relation it had with the mystery of God, with the Father, lived as the true servant of God, as the real Son of God, as the one who always obeyed the Father. In this sense, Jesus was the highest mystic we can think of, his humanity lived in the deepest and purest experience and relation to the mystery of God.

3. Main features of Jesus' mysticism

Five fundamental characteristics stand out in the mysticism of Jesus.

(1) It is a *filial* mysticism. What is transparent in Jesus' prayer is that he addresses God as Abba, as "Father". In this way he stands before God as "Son". Using a term like Abba, which comes from a more infantile language, he manifests a relationship of closeness, intimacy, and tenderness. However, the scene in which it appears, the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, reveals that the filial relationship includes obedience to the will of God.

As a Son, then, Jesus lives in trust and surrender. He lives his filiation as an expression of mission: to fulfill the commission that the Father has given him. For this reason, his mysticism does not center him in himself, rather it centers him in God and in the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. At the same time, this mysticism generates the confidence of knowing himself in the hands of the Father, of knowing himself as heard and sustained, even in the dark moments of the garden and the cross.

The Father, with whom Jesus relates in prayer, is the Father of mercies. For this reason, in his ministry of preaching the advent of the Kingdom of God, Jesus manifests a preferential and merciful love for the poor, the sinners. The parable called the "prodigal son" (Lk 15: 11-32),

⁷ Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep. 101, ad Cleodonium*, 32 (SCh 208, 50).

⁸ Maximus Confessor, *Opusc.* 6 (PG 91, 65-69); 16 (PG 91, 184-212); *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* (PG 91, 288-353).

which could be called the “father of the lost son”, reflects the face of God that Jesus lives in his mystical prayer and fulfills in his ministry.

(2) His is a *praying* mysticism. In the Lord’s Prayer, the fundamental features of Jesus’ way of praying are revealed to us. If we follow the structure of the Lord’s Prayer, the first thing that is confirmed is the image of God as “father”, for that is how this prayer begins: “Our Father who art in heaven” (Mt 6: 9).

The seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer are usually divided into two parts. The first three, according to Matthew's version, which I am following, constitute what are called the “thou” petitions, because they are addressed to God:

“Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done” (Mt 6: 9-10).

In these petitions, we perceive a clear theological dimension. They are addressed to God, and they do not seek immediate benefit for the person praying. They open themselves so that the adorable mystery of God may be recognized, so that his kingdom and his will may be implanted on earth. It is a prayer that floats over God’s glory, his holiness, his majesty. And he asks, with humility, that what divine majesty means may burst forth.

The remaining four petitions are called “we”, for we are the beneficiaries. They are the following:

“Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors;
And led us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil” (Mt 6: 11-13).

On the one hand, these petitions look towards daily life: the daily bread, which the Church Fathers will interpret as the Eucharistic bread, the authentic bread of life; the debts and the sins, which have to be forgiven by generating an authentic fraternity. The last two, temptation and evil, point towards the final fate of the individual and eternal life.

(3) It is a mysticism of *service*. From his filial relationship with the Father, Jesus gives himself to the service of the proclamation of the good news (Gospel) of the irruption of the Kingdom of God. His entire public ministry is structured around this service.

Jesus’ relationship with God situates him as a servant. He identifies himself with the Old Testament figure of the Servant of Yahweh. In the

washing of the feet (Jn 13), he performs a typical work of servants: washing the feet. This scene is a splendid manifestation of the mysticism of service that characterizes his life.

This service leads him to an important teaching activity. In this area the parables stand out. His teaching highlights that the mysticism of Jesus includes language about God, by means of symbols and images. It is not that God cannot be known, rather there are symbols that allow us to understand how he acts and how the Kingdom of God comes.

In this service, Jesus eats with sinners, and in this way he manifests the face of the Father, of the God of mercies. For this reason, the mysticism of Jesus includes, as a fundamental component, the community. Namely, he calls disciples as followers, and invites them to an experience of commensality: he gathers in houses to eat and is unafraid to sit and eat with sinners (cf. e.g. Lk 15: 1-2). The figure of Jesus that appears in the Gospels contrasts with the asceticism of John the Baptist and the rigorism of the scribes. In other words, the mysticism of Jesus is joyful and festive.

(4) It is a *combative* mysticism. In his ministry Jesus clashes with different groups. His ministry is accompanied by conflict, whose keystone is the image of God as Father. In other words, when Jesus translates into practice what God's fatherhood means, sparks fly.

He clashes with the Pharisees because he understands the Law differently. On the one hand, he does not comply with the laws of purity concerning food and utensils. But also, on the other hand, he skips the Sabbath observance and heals on Saturday. Thus, he shows not only that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, but also that God rejoices in the deliverance of his children who are oppressed by demons or diseases.

Jesus' criticism of the sacrificial system of the Temple clashed head-on with the Sadducees and the priestly families, to the point of leading to his death. With his critique of the Temple, Jesus presents an image of God who is not served unless there is the practice of mercy and justice; a God who does not discriminate between Jews and non-Jews, between pure and impure. Moreover, with the irruption of the Kingdom of God thanks to Jesus, the two great institutions of the OT, which mediated the relationship with God, the Law and the Temple, are relativized.

Thus, the mysticism of Jesus teaches us to face conflict, to not compromise with accommodations when the true image of God and the way of pleasing Him is at stake.

(5) Finally, the mysticism of Jesus is *paschal*. On account of this conflict, Jesus' mysticism led him to death. Jesus' surrender and fidelity to the mission entrusted to him reaches the point of death on the cross. That is why it is a *sacrificial* mysticism. His surrender to death is an act of obedience before God and of generosity for us, for our sins, as can be

deduced from the gestures and words of the Last Supper. God the Father accepts this sacrifice, delights in him to the point of raising him from the dead through the Spirit, exalting him, seating him at his right on the throne of glory, declaring him Lord of the universe and making him the source of all his blessings.

For all these reasons, Christian mysticism – in following Christ and conforming our lives to him by the gift of the Spirit and the sacraments – is a mysticism that is filial, prayerful, realized in service, combative and paschal.

4. The Healthiness of Jesus' mysticism

As we have seen, the mysticism of Jesus is closely intertwined with his prayer, calling God Abba, and with the active presence of the Holy Spirit in his humanity. Consequently, if we can pray precisely as Jesus did (cf. Mk 14: 36), also calling God in prayer Abba (cf. Gal 4: 6; Rm 8: 15); and if this prayer is induced in us by the same Holy Spirit that anointed and guided Jesus' humanity (cf. Gal 4: 6; Rm 8: 15), then we can partake, in a different level, in the mysticism of Jesus.

The mysticism of Jesus generates health and well-being in those who live it. I will only point out three reasons that justify this affirmation.

(1) We are created in the image of the Son (Gen 1: 26-27; Col 1: 15). Therefore, the filial mysticism of the Son responds to what we, as creatures, radically are: called to configure ourselves with the Son (cf. Rom 8: 29).

(2) The mysticism of Jesus does not require extraordinary abilities or special circumstances to be lived. It is for everyone, for daily life, for work, for the family, for situations of conflict that arise, for friction in living together. It helps us to live daily life from God and towards God and, as a result, with depth and peace.

(3) The mysticism of Jesus, the new Adam, teaches us the way not to lose ourselves in the face of multiple temptations under the cloak of good. The new Adam, with his filial life, teaches us the authentic virtues and the way to overcome the vices that threaten to ruin our path towards God, our authentic humanization⁹. Thus, the mysticism of Jesus includes the potential to teach us to overcome all situations from the roots in God, including conflict, abandonment, loneliness¹⁰ and death.

⁹ Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *Terapéutica de las enfermedades espirituales* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2014).

¹⁰ Cf. O. González de Cardedal, *Jesucristo. Soledad y compañía* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2016).

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Archpriest Alexiy Baburin

“Sober inebriation” as antithesis of passion for alcohol drinking

Health, as defined by WHO (World Health Organization), is a state of "complete physical, mental and social well-being".¹ I want to note that this definition contains the idea of "well-being".

Jesus Christ says that "*There is only One who is good*".² At the same time, the Lord calls on His followers to conform unto God, to gain spiritual wealth through God, saying, "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"³

I want to note that in the IV century BC the ancient Greek philosopher and physician Aristotle the Stagirite came to the conclusion "that the ultimate purpose of human existence, and therefore of human

¹ Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org., 2, 100.

² Mt.19:17.

³ Mt.5:48.