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Our Teacher
OF
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RECOMMENDATIONS.

ST. PAUL, Minn., January 24, 1879.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER — You have done a great service to our Catholic people for which I cannot too much thank you on my own part. You have put within the reach of every Catholic the means by which, if he wills, he may become thoroughly instructed in the great truths, doctrines, and practices of his religion. What we have to deplore is, so few Catholics care to take pains to acquire an intelligent understanding, that is, the grounds and reasons, of their faith and practice. Your books, so far, leave them no excuse, if such they have heretofore had. These books are not merely elementary, nor are they dryly dogmatic; they give reasons and authorities, explain and illustrate, and, written in a plain and easy style, they well deserve to be entitled — Catholic Theology Popularized.

The next thing is to get our people to read these books; get them to think less about the things of the world and more about the things of God and of their own souls and eternity. How can this be done? Who will do it? Oh, if the priesthood in this country were what it ought to be what the grace of ordination intended it to be, how little cause could we have to lament anything on the part of the people! *Quid, si sal evanuerit?* And for the conversion of the American people to the Faith, how little is done, or rather how little is done *effectively!* And no people better disposed by inquiring minds and deeply religious sentiments! Here, again, what if to the convincing evidences of holy faith were added the example of holy lives in those who are appointed to be the light to the world!

You are doing your appointed work, dear Rev. Father, and doing it well. Let us pray that God, in his mercy and goodness, will raise up some one in the Church in the United States, who will have the appointed work to awaken us bishops and priests to a sense — a true sense — of the solemn issues depending upon us and upon our ministry.

Begging you will accept my very grateful acknowledgements, I am faithfully and sincerely yours,

✠ Thomas L. Grace,
Bishop St. Paul.

And a *later* letter saying:

ST. PAUL, November 14th, 1880.

REV. DEAR SIR — I have received with much thankfulness the copy of "Holy Eucharist and Penance," which you were so kind to send me.

I have already, I believe, expressed my very high esteem of the series of books you have written, of which this is a continuation, in explanation of those things of faith and practice upon which it is so important in these times that Catholics should be thoroughly instructed. The present volume on the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance, fully sustains the claims of excellence of its predecessors. Thanking you anew, I am, Rev. dear Sir,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

✠ Thomas L. Grace,
Bishop St. Paul.

And again a *later* letter saying:

ST. PAUL, 12. Dec. 1881.

Rev. M. Muller, C.S.S.R., St. Louis, Mo.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER — I received the book you were so kind to send me, "The Greatest and the First Commandment". I am reading it. What I have already said of the other books of the series I repeat now with *greater emphasis of this one and of all*. The science of theology, or the philosophy of religion, has been sealed except to the clergy and the highly educated among laymen. Few of the latter, however, care to go through the drudgery of study in a language foreign to them and with forms and a terminology requiring long practice to make familiar. Yet the greatest need of the Church in the present day is to have Catholics thoroughly instructed in the principles of their religion and the reasons for their faith. I conceive this to be your motive in writing these books — to supply the means by which this most needed knowledge may be placed within the reach of every earnest Catholic. It is this that constitutes the super-eminent excellence of these books. But not only do they instruct with utmost thoroughness and precision, they are deeply edifying; and, what is of greater consideration, they are pleasing and attractive by their style and manner. I mean no mere commendation in writing this. These books to be available for their real value must be known to our catholic people, which I regret to say is not the case except to a very limited extent; when known they will amply commend themselves.

Thanking you, dear Father, for the instruction, the edification, the refreshment of soul I have derived from your books, I am with sincerest regards,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

✠ Thomas L. Grace,
Bishop St. Paul.

MARYSVILLE, Cal. }
 VIGIL OF ST. ANDREW, 1880. }

MY DEAR FATHER MULLER — Ever since I read your book on the Public Schools, I admired and loved you, and your subsequent works have only increased my love and my admiration. May God spare you many years more to write and to diffuse similar works for the honor and glory of his holy name and the salvation of souls. The reading of a bad book — Terence's plays, almost ruined Augustine. The perusal of a few verses of St. Paul, which he took up and read, led to his glorious conversion. And indeed, that heart should be hard which your Treatises on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance, the Prodigal Son, would not deeply affect! I have no words adequate to express my appreciation of the beautiful examples illustrating your sound expositions of Christian doctrine. Words move, but examples attract. Can we not, will we not do, and suffer what so many in our own rank and station have done and suffered? This is the holy resolution and conclusion to which your exemplification of Christian Doctrine leads. *Prosperè igitur, procede, Pater mi, et regna.*

Yours in Christ,

✠ E. O'Connell.

In another letter of June 27. 1879, he says:

MY DEAR REV. FATHER MULLER — Accept my heartfelt thanks for the three volumes you had the kindness to send me, viz: "God the Teacher of Mankind;" "Explanation of the Apostles' Creed;" "Grace and the Sacraments." Accept also my congratulation on the important services you have rendered to our holy religion by the publication of these works. They cannot fail to commend themselves, not only to all Catholics, but to all sincere enquirers after Truth. I beg of God, dear Father, to prolong your life until you finish the contemplated series, and thus secure for yourself and your readers the unfading crown promised to "those that instruct many to justice." (Dan. xii. 3.)

I remain, Dear Father Muller, your obliged servant in Christ,

✠ E. O'Connell,

Bishop of Grass-Valley.

MARYSVILLE, Cal., Nov. 17th, 1880.

REV. DEAR FATHER — Your last (not the last I hope) work on the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Penance is, in my opinion, admirable. You exemplify the sound doctrine inculcated, so that your readers may

be animated to say with St Augustine: "Cannot I, with the grace of God, do and suffer, as they did and suffered?" When can you visit us and diffuse the works which God enabled you to write? Oh! please visit us.

Yours in Christ,

✠ E. O'Connell,
V. A. Misprat.

OGDENSBURG, Sept. 23d, 1881.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER — I have the pleasure of acknowledging the reception of your work "God the Teacher of Mankind." I avail myself of the first opportunity since my return home to thank you for it.

I am again reading it with great pleasure, and I sincerely wish it could be studied and read by the priests and laity of my diocese. We have many good books of instruction, but I scarcely know of one more practical than yours.

Again thanking you for your kindness in sending the work, and commending myself to your prayers,

I am very sincerely in Christ,

✠ Edgar P. Wadhams,
Bishop Ogdensburg.

BALTIMORE, June 24, 1879.

REV. DEAR FATHER: — I have to acknowledge the receipt of the doctrinal works which you were kind enough to send me. The last received was your book on "Grace and the Sacraments."

The circulation of this last admirable treatise will not fail, under God, to enlighten minds in the most important truths of salvation, to promote piety and bring many souls to Christ. I trust that your labors will be rewarded by a large patronage.

I remain, Rev. dear Father, yours faithfully in Christ,

✠ James Gibbons,
Archbishop of Baltimore.

ATLANTA, Ga., July 22, 1879.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER: — Your volume, entitled "Grace and the Sacraments," came duly to hand. I congratulate you upon this third volume in this beautiful series of works explanatory of our holy religion. Our own people greatly need instruction. We lose many from their ignorance of the sacred truths. Our English language is not very rich in books which will properly show to all the beauties of

divine truths. The world is deluged with books calculated to ruin souls, and therefore I am happy to see some at least offering an antidote to the poison of bad reading. Your style is simple and very pleasing. The numerous examples will not only illustrate the doctrines, but render the books more attractive and useful. I hope truly that this book will have a wide circulation, and may find many who will read it.

Recommending myself to your prayers, I am yours truly, in Christ,

✠ Wm. H. Gross,
Bishop of Savannah.

NOTRE DAME, Ind., February 5th, 1883.

REV. AND DEAR FATHER MULLER: — I was much pleased to learn from your letter of 8th ult. that you had finished the manuscript of another volume of the series entitled "God the Teacher of Mankind." The plan you have adopted of interspersing edifying incidents throughout your works gives them a peculiar charm. I think very few persons, even among young people, can begin to read any of your books without following it to the end.

Such books as yours are much needed at the present day, and I wonder that they are not more generally recommended by the Catholic Press. The mass of our people do not read enough; they are so much taken up by the noise and bustle and worldly amusements around them that they pay no heed to the inner voice commanding them to "take up and read." By obeying this voice Augustine and Ignatius Loyola became saints, and La Harpe was changed from a scoffing infidel into a devout Christian.

Here, at the University, our young people as well as their elders derive great pleasure from your books. Instruction, and entertainment are so well blended in them that it could hardly be otherwise. Such books should find their way into every Catholic family. It is undoubtedly the duty of every one having care of souls — pastors, parents, teachers, and the Press — to further this object by every means in their power. I will try to have a notice of your forthcoming book published in the "Notre Dame Scholastic," our College paper, next week. — Would it not be a good plan to send a volume of each of your books, — one at a time — beginning with the new one, to the various Catholic papers for a notice? I think you would find this a profitable means of advertising. Protestants indulge in it extensively and it is the secret of their success. The key of success in American business is: "keep a good thing and advertise largely." Now you have the good thing and

I think you ought to advertise a little more. A notice in such papers as "The Freeman's Journal," "Catholic Mirror," "Boston Pilot" etc., would surely call the attention of many readers to your books, readers who would gladly buy them, but will without aforesaid medium never as much as hear of them.

I thought, I ought to make this suggestion to you. It is a thought which often occurred to me when I saw other books advertised or sent to be noticed when there was not a shadow of hope to receive a favorable notice, or again when I saw some Protestant firms make desperate efforts to sell a few books when former failures no longer justified another attempt.

Hoping, dear Rev. Father, that Almighty God may long spare you for your Apostolic labors, I remain

Your devoted Servant in Christ,

N. J. STOFFEL, C. S. C.

The Rev. THOMAS MACKIN of Rock Island writes March 25th, 1881, to the Rev. Father L. COOK, C.S.S.R. as follows :

I received Father Muller's books. When I opened, say the volume on the Sacraments and saw matter ready at hand for Lenten instruction, and pastoral instructions throughout the year, I said to myself *one volume of the lot is worth the price of the whole* and it is a wonder Cook did not send them to many priests. With their aid I at once announced "There will be the Beads, and a sermon followed by Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night during Lent." I did not in my enthusiasm tell that Father Muller sent me the Sermons. But I make no scruple in receiving them as well from him as if they came from St. Peter or the Holy Spirit.

All the Catechisms I have seen yet for full, ready, instructive preaching matter are in nowise comparable with Father Muller's works. When another book appears of his, let it come this way.

Love to the dear ones.

Thomas Mackin.

GALENA, Ills, Dec. 28th, 1880.

DEAR FATHER MULLER — Have the goodness to send me the book on the Holy Eucharist and Penance. Your excellent books help us poor priests to instruct our people. Your examples and illustrations delight me. You seem to have ever before you the words of our dear Lord, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

I am gratefully and respectfully yours etc.,

P. Farrelly.

EXETER, Neb., Jan. 12th, 1883.

DEAR FATHER MULLER — Your work "God the Teacher" just suits me. I consider it a timely work, especially fitted to meet the wants of souls earnest in their search for sound doctrine and revealed Truth.

Believe me in Christ,

George F. Emblen.

MADISON, Wisc., Jan'y 21st, 1882.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER — I have often used your work "God the Teacher of Mankind" for Sunday instructions to the people. I do not wish to flatter you, but I sincerely wish that books were written as yours in a popular style. — When I had charge of a parish, I bought all I could get of your books, and they were as well thumbed as many a novel was. Particularly the volume of the Sacraments — not only the older folks read them, but also to my great satisfaction, the young people. — I tell every priest to get these books for himself and for his parochial libraries. I guess I must have distributed two dozen of your books on the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice — in my small parish.

Hoping that these good books will find a wide circulation especially through your missionaries, I remain

Yours truly in Christ,

A. J. Gerhard.

YOUNGSTOWN, O., Jan'y 11th, 1883.

REV. FATHER — The books I ordered from you a year ago I have given away to do good. Please send me again all your works, for which I have only words of praise. I would not like to be without them, for ready reference in preparation of my sermons and catechism instructions. I use them a great deal in the odd moments I have for study and preparation from a busy daily life and always with profit and advantage to myself, and I hope also to others.

Respectfully

E. Mears.

AUSTIN, Texas, Jan'y 22d, 1883.

REV. DEAR FATHER — I have read with much attention and deep interest your work "God the Teacher of Mankind". I assure you I highly appreciate it, and beg most cordially to congratulate you on the great services you have rendered to the interests of Catholic truth and enlightenment by the execution of the task you have imposed on yourself. We owe you much for a work so useful, and instructions both to the clergy and laity. Your style is very plain and attractive, even when you explain

what is most difficult to understand in Catholic theology. In my humble opinion, this work meets the needs of our age and country; for it not only instructs the reader in the true religion in an interesting manner, but leads him also imperceptibly to solid piety and devotion. I ardently desire to see this work in every Catholic family. May the Holy Ghost continue to direct your pen.

Believe me your devoted confrere in Christ,

P. Lauth, C.S.C.

(From the "CATHOLIC WORLD," January 1881.)

This volume Holy Eucharist and Penance is another of the series of instructive books that Father Müller has given to the public under the title of "God the Teacher of Mankind," and it is as good as the former, and in some respects even superior to it. It treats of more practical points of Christian Doctrine, and in just as popular a way. It is designed as a plain and comprehensive explanation of the catechism; so he gives the question of the catechism in large type and answers it, and then gives the explanation. The book, on this account, is very well adapted for any one who has to do with the instruction of others in the faith. Father Müller's explanations are clear and intelligent, and what is more, put in such a way that it is really a pleasure to read them. They are adapted to the simple as well as the learned. They are plain without being childish, and comprehensive without being abstrusive.

Nor is Father Müller's book adapted simply for those persons whose duty is to instruct. It is so intelligently written that it can of itself supply their place. It is a book that ought to be in every Catholic family.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first part treats of the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament, the second of the Sacrament of Penance. Father Müller, under each of these heads, has taken up all the different interesting and practical questions, so that on the points treated he has given a manual of popular theology.

(From the NEW YORK FREEMAN'S JOURNAL.)

"Catholic Theology Popularized." That is what the Venerable Bishop of St. Paul, Minn., the Rt. Rev. Dr. Grace, O. P., calls these volumes

Father Michael Müller, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, has written a great deal. We chided him for proposing to publish his first book — and were ashamed of ourself, when we had read

the first two pages. Our chiding was: "Do you propose to improve on what St. Alphonsus has written on the Holy Eucharist?" The humble Religious promised us Masses, and Rosaries, if we would read his manuscript! The first few sentences shamed us! We were, intensely ashamed! But, now, comes a vastly greater work.

To be frank about it, as Father Müller has put forth volume after volume, we have growled to ourself; and, we think, have answered other growls: "Father Müller writes too much!" Then we have taken up his last volume, at the time of its publication. Picked it up, to look at it. But, somehow, we have wanted to read more of it. But, some one in a very different condition of age and position, gets sight of it, asks for it, and carries it off.

Father Michael Müller is a true son of St. Alphonsus Liguori. Like St. Alphonsus, he follows, with wonderful precision, the philosophic plan of St. Thomas of Aquin, the "Angel of the schools." We do not know how profound Father Müller's studies may have been; but his writings resemble, above all others, in an ascetic point of view, St. Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church Catholic, and St. Gregory the Great, Pope, and Doctor of the Church Catholic. These wrote, both, very profusely. They illustrated much that they wrote with very many, and some strange, incidents. In following such illustrious Doctors of the Church Catholic, Father Müller has been, not only safe, but fortunate. It is apparent to knowing ones, that, since the Council of the Vatican, there are doctrinal questions, with their corollaries, or consequences, that have not been, could not have been, answered before, with dogmatic assurance. There are "standard books," so treating of vital questions that the Sacred Congregation of the Index would be bound to condemn them. Hence the value of a new, fresh, pious, and careful exposition of Catholic Doctrine, setting forth what we need to believe, and to do, to save our souls — not in the drybones of a formal, and dismal, catechism, but in the life teaching of the living Catholic Faith. This Father Müller has taken in hand. His four volumes: "The Church and her Enemies;" "Explanation of the Apostles' Creed;" "Grace and the Sacrament;" and "Holy Eucharist and Penance," form four most remarkable volumes. (The New York Freeman's Journal, February 26th, 1881.)

(And in a later number saying:)

We call the volume before us "volume five," but it is hard to place. Father Müller is hard to place. When he is dead, and all the good of him can be told, we hope it may be recorded in the 'Freeman's Journal.'

We, according to the laws of nature, shall have gone before Michael Müller — our dear friend! He has lived all his life long for our dear Lord.

“They who shall have been taught (in the Divine Science) shall shine as the glory of the firmament; and they who instruct many unto justice as stars, to unending eternities.” Amen!

We have read a good deal, for one of this age, in the grand dogmatics, somewhat in the Ascetics, and in the Moral, of Catholic Theology. Each new book of Father Müller’s rouses our wrath, that: “He writes too much!” But, somehow, each volume, as we read it, brings out rare and hidden gems.

In other books we find matters for abundant meditation. But, in each volume of Father Müller’s writings we find those kinds of things that meet us down in our everyday life; and that we do not need to cock our heads up in the air to go into contemplation about.

Father Müller has not written his five volumes in logical order. To betray his secret, he thought he might not live to finish the work he proposed — a genial, and general exposition, in a popular form, of the doctrines, and practices, that the Catholic Church wishes her children to know and do; and, so, wrote, for example, on “Grace and the Sacraments” out of the logical order, — because there was much need!

Father Müller’s last volume is on the “Commandments of God.” As in all his other volumes, he gives not high points for abstract meditation, but practical work, and homely illustrations to excite interest.

(From the New York CATHOLIC HERALD.)
CATHOLIC THEOLOGY POPULARIZED.

In our century great progress has been made in the art of teaching. Almost everywhere teachers can be found who are competent for their work. They understand that they must begin by studying the capacity of those whom they are to teach, their way of thinking and speaking, their ideas, their character, their turn of mind. To these, they know, they must accommodate themselves. They are expert in illustrating and simplifying their instruction. They are persuaded that they must go over it again and again, in order that when it is understood, it may not be forgotten again. They are provided with many little arts and contrivances for the purpose of rousing the attention and interest of their pupils. In this way admirable results are obtained, to the great satisfaction of parents, managers and inspectors.

Now, if such great pains are taken in securing success in profane sciences, what great pains should not be taken in securing success in the science of religion! The science of religion is, of all sciences, the most excellent as well as the most important. No subject, therefore, should be treated with greater care and skill than the subject of religion. Catholics are taught and believe all the truths proposed by the Catholic Church for their belief; but many, though they believe, do not seem to realize sufficiently what it is they believe. They have not thought much upon it. They have not penetrated its depths. Their knowledge is superficial, and their devotion consequently cold. And this, for many reasons, is particularly the case in this country. Here we have immense congregations and few priests, and they loaded down with the building of churches and a variety of work which has been already done in other countries. The people often are either out of reach of the church or struggling for the means of living, and, therefore, have grown careless, and failed to receive the instruction which they require, or if they received it, it was given in a cold superficial manner. To secure, then, success and interest in giving religious instruction, it is necessary that the teacher himself should be well instructed. Only those who are complete masters of their science can make it simple and easy to others. They are not afraid of getting into difficulties or making mistakes, and nowhere are mistakes more dangerous, nowhere is neglect more fatal than in religion. No time and labor should be spared in acquiring a clear knowledge of every truth of our holy religion. For want of this clear knowledge, many explain and deliver the sacred truths of religion as if these truths were fictions. Need we wonder if little interest is taken by children and even grown people in religious instructions given in a dull, dry, unreal way, as so much of lessons which must be got over like the other drudgery of the day?

We know of no author, who has explained in English the truths of our religion in so plain, so devout, so attractive, so solid a manner as Father Muller. Any one who is familiar with his works will not hesitate to say that the author possesses the rare gift of expressing doctrinal sublimities in language so simple that a child, without effort, can understand. It is on this account that Father Muller's books have become so very popular, and are doing so much good wherever they have been introduced.

We call here the attention of the public to his great work, "God the Teacher of Mankind." Three volumes are finished. The first vol-

ume treats of the Church and her enemies. The second volume contains a plain solid and devout explanation of the Apostles' Creed. The third volume treats of grace and the sacraments.

In his introductory chapter to this last volume Father Muller says that the good teacher of religion is "like a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." (Matt. xiii. 52.) All that he says there in commenting on these words of the Gospel is literally true of himself.

As a father of a family makes use of different means to support his family, so in like manner Father Muller presents Catholic truths in different ways in order to make the reader understand them the better, love them more ardently and live up to them more faithfully. He uses all kinds of parables, similes and stories to set those truths into clearer light and impress them more deeply upon the mind, and more devoutly on the heart of the reader. "He bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." He makes use of things already known and familiar to the reader, in order to make him the better understand those which are new and unintelligible to him.

These books of Father Muller deserve to be entitled "*Catholic Theology Made Popular*." They have this advantage over other treatises on the same subjects that, while they command the attention of the highest, they are within the comprehension of any person of ordinary intelligence. We know of no work in English better adapted to afford Catholics, whose opportunities of study have not been very great, a clear and intelligent reason for the faith that is in them.

(From the New Orleans MORNING STAR.)

This work (God the Teacher of Mankind) of the learned and zealous Father Muller is as interesting as it is instructive, and as beautiful as it is solid.

Father Muller seems never to weary of his task to enlighten souls, and as one of those commissioned by our Lord "to teach all nations," he is ever foremost in the work and ever zealous in its performance.

He realizes that ignorance leads to infidelity, and that the reason why many persons "do not believe" is because they lack proper information on the subjects proposed to their belief.

Profound questions of theology and morals are treated in a plain and popular style, which is rendered all the more attractive by the frequent introduction of illustrative anecdotes and stories.

Catholics are too easily satisfied with "the faith that is in them," without acquiring a reason for that faith. To such as these, Father Muller's new work is a holy gift, for it satisfies reason and explains the truth. Pilate asked our Lord himself: "What is truth?" and then went away from the Divine Teacher before the answer could be given. Catholics themselves resemble Pilate in not taking the trouble to learn what truth is and what it teaches. In olden times, when there were no books, when men did not know how to read, God did not expect them to know more than they could learn from zealous teachers and holy missionaries; but in our day, the teacher's voice and the missionaries' zeal are largely supplemented by the instructions contained in books, and in view of the splendid works now furnished us, the responsibility of any Catholic who remains wilfully ignorant, must indeed be very great in the sight of God.

Father Muller's series, of which the fourth volume is the one now under notice, comprises, we believe, everything necessary to a clear understanding and a practical knowledge of our holy religion.

This series is very appropriately styled: "God the Teacher of Mankind," — and, having first explained who that Great Teacher is, the Rev. author details all that he has taught. This unfolding of doctrine and of the laws of morality, is not laid before the mind until he proves the divine institution of the Church, the teacher commissioned by God to instruct all nations. To prove this divine authority is the main point, the groundwork of all Father Muller's writings, and to disprove it is the great object of Infidels and Protestants.

"Destroy the teacher and there will be no one taught!" is the rallying cry of the enemies of the Church. We once heard Father Muller tell the following anecdote, which explains this view: A school boy hurried off one morning to tell a companion that there would be no school because the schoolhouse was on fire. "But," anxiously inquired the other, "is the teacher burning up too?"

Non-Catholics are very anxious to overwhelm the teacher in the many fires of persecution which they build around her, but if they will read Father Muller's clear and comprehensive account of the foundation of the Church, historically developed, of her mission in the past, of her living power in the present, of her divine promises for the future, they will begin, at least to suspect that she can never be destroyed.

Now this treatise on the holy Eucharist and Penance, is, we might almost say, the crowning glory of Father Muller's series. In simple and earnest language, the whole economy of the divine plan in the institution

of these wonderful sacraments, is unfolded to the mind, while a devotion and reverence are awakened in the heart, which must lead to a holy life, rich in all the graces that flow through these sacred channels.

Father Muller may not possess the artistic elegance and terseness of Cardinals Newman and Manning; but there is an earnestness, a simplicity and a tenderness in his thoughts and language which goes straight to the heart, arousing all its faith, hope and charity, while it enlightens the mind and fixes it firmly upon the great and wonderful truths of God.

We do not believe a question can be asked upon the subject of the Holy Eucharist and Penance, which is not answered in the work before us. This book, well studied by parents, carefully taught to children, and thoughtfully read by Catholics, would make better Christians of us all! It would teach us to love God in his hidden mystery, would help us to prize the graces of the Sacraments, make us realize the supernatural wonders in our midst, and impress upon our minds the unspeakable privilege of being members of that divinely instituted Church which alone has the power and the will to teach man how to live and how to die.

(From the Chicago PILOT.)

Father Muller's style, though eminently instructive, is at the same time highly-entertaining and entirely devoid of that dryness which we usually find in religious writing. Its beautiful simplicity and clearness make its admirable lessons equally within the comprehension of all classes. Such works will do a vast amount of good in counteracting the pernicious effects of current literature. Every Catholic family should have this work of Father Muller, "God the Teacher of Mankind."

SAVANNAH, Nov. 19th, 1880.

VERY DEAR FATHER MULLER — On my journey to the South, your book "Holy Eucharist and Penance" has been of the greatest comfort and consolation to me. Whether it was the peculiar frame of my mind, or *yours*, when you wrote it, I received from its study peculiar benefit. It seemed to me to be written with more than ordinary interior conception and piety. Some passages penetrated my whole soul, especially when the results of frequent confession, are portrayed, "What peace of mind, what reformation of life, what confidence in God, what lightness of heart, what facility in the performance of good works, what an increase of devotion, what tenderness of heart, what clearness of intellect, what

purity of conscience, what an increase of all spiritual gifts which conduce to our eternal salvation!"

Also, the way our Lord settled the dispute between the angels and men in page 145, thrilled my whole being, and penetrated it with the deepest conception of the crowning mystery of the Church! That great mystery, so ignored by outsiders, which binds the new-found soul in such unspeakable loving chains, and bestows such ineffable priceless joys!

And thus I am making my journey, my body strengthened, and my soul elevated by this gift of your book, all the time wondering how it can be the work of *one*, who, a few short years ago, could not, as a foreigner, write, without difficulty, the English language! God's ways are not like our ways!

L. M. C.

In another letter, saying: "I have not read all your book (The Greatest and the First Commandment); but the chapter on Law, and the ancient usages in that respect, have been peculiarly acceptable to me. There are many things in it, (that altho' I have been in the Church many years) are new to me. If I had had it years ago, it would have enlightened me, in many respects, for a convert coming into the Church, as a married woman, labors under many disadvantages, for want of instruction, and your books are peculiarly adapted to such persons. Why dont you say this, on the title page, which would call the attention of *converts* to it, whereby they would get a world of instruction, not had elsewhere; for it is difficult, now-a-day to get at anything, everybody seems to be engaged about something else.

GOD THE TEACHER OF MANKIND;

OR,

POPULAR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY.

APOLOGETICAL, DOGMATICAL, MORAL, LITURGICAL, PASTORAL AND
ASCETICAL.

SACRAMENTALS, PRAYER, VICES AND VIRTUES,
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, ETC.

BY

M. Müller
MICHAEL MÜLLER, C. SS. R.

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CHAPTER I.

SACRAMENTALS.

By the sin of Adam the curse of God had come upon all creatures: "Cursed is the earth in thy work," said God to Adam. (Gen. iii, 17.) But Christ came to take away not only man's sin, but also the curse which had fallen upon all other creatures of the earth. And as Christ gave power to the apostles to drive out sin from the souls of men, by applying to them the merits of his redemption through the sacraments, so in like manner he gave them power to free creatures from the curse of sin, by applying to them the fruits of redemption through prayers and blessings, in order that creatures thus blessed and consecrated should work good to those that love God; for "every creature," says St. Paul, "is sanctified by the word and prayer." (1 Tim. iv, 5.)

"To me," said Christ to his apostles, "is given all power in heaven and on earth. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." (Matt. xxviii, 18.) He who bestows all power, excludes none. Christ, therefore, gave to his apostles and their lawful successors in the Catholic church, the power to cast out devils from possessed persons, and to prevent the evil spirits from hurting men in their bodies or property: "And calling together the twelve apostles," says St. Luke (ix, 1), "he gave them power and authority over all devils." And the same evangelist tells us, also, that the disciples cast out the devils from possessed persons, at which power they were greatly amazed, and said:

“Lord, the devils also are subject to us in thy name.” (Luke x, 17.) Christ also gave to his apostles power to bless or consecrate things for the divine service, or for the pious use of the faithful: as altars, chalices, vestments, churches, graveyards, holy-water, oil, bread, wine, palms.

The Church elevates and sanctifies nature by using sensible objects in her worship, in her sacraments, and in her sacramentals. She consecrates and deifies the wheat and the grape. They become the means of the highest act of worship. The Church takes the salt of the sea, the oil of the olive, the perfumed tears of the incense tree; she takes the fibres of the humble flax, the fleece of the lamb, the glossy web of the silk worm, the wax of the virgin bee; she takes the gold of the mountains, and the pearl of the ocean, and they become in her hands, beautiful instruments of divine worship. She uses inferior nature in administering her sacraments by which man is saved and God glorified. She places flowers upon the altars. She even employs in her symbols the images of the lamb, the dove, the fish, and so on. Every thing belongs to her, and as Sovereign Mistress, she uses everything with a prudence and wisdom truly divine. Whatever things the Church touches, she elevates, purifies and sanctifies by her prayers and exorcisms; she superadds a special goodness by her blessings, and then she employs these things as agents to bear God’s blessings to man.

Sweet Jesus, all on earth I see
 Live, bloom, and labor but for thee;
 The golden wheat grows and the vine
 To form the soul’s sweet food divine.
 For thee the lowly plant doth bloom,
 Is bruised and buried in its tomb;
 Then spun and woven snowy-white
 To be thy couch all day, all night.

For thee, dear Lord, the silk-worm weaves
 Its glossy woof from bright green leaves
 To deck thy shrine with hangings rare,
 That rustling whisper: God is there!

The precious tree sweet incense weeps
 O'er thy lorn heart whose love ne'er sleeps;
 The incense soars through perfumed air
 To thee like pure hearts' holy prayer.

Sweet Jesus, on the fragrant lea
 The gentle floweret blooms for thee;
 Near thy blest door it sweetly sighs,
 For love of thee it faints and dies!

For thee, sweet Jesus, all for thee
 Strives day by day the virgin bee,
 And deftly builds its waxen cell
 To light the home where thou dost dwell!

For thee, sweet Jesus, all for thee,
 Bears flow'r and fruit the olive tree,
 To waste for thee its soft pure light,
 The livelong day, the weary night.

Ah! why should the wheat and the grape grow when the holy sacrifice has ceased? Why should the olive grow when the sacred unction is no longer given? Why should the tree give its incense when the fire of the sanctuary is extinguished? Why should the virgin bee form its waxen cell when the taper no longer burns on the altar? Why should the flowers grow and shed their perfume when the feasts of the Blessed Virgin are no longer observed? Why should the earth exist when Jesus dwells there no longer in his sacrament of love? Why should the human race continue to exist when it has ceased to people heaven with saints?

The Church then, making use of the power which Jesus Christ has given her, blesses all that is intended for her use, such as altar-linen, sacerdotal vestments, sacred vessels, crosses, statues and other objects of piety. She

blesses them to make them holy and to consecrate them to the divine service, and to render them worthy of our veneration.

The Church also solemnly blesses the bells in the belfry.

Plutarch relates (in *Vita Crassi*) that the Parthians made the observation that hearing is of all the senses, that which most easily moves the soul and the passions, and transports man out of himself. Hence they made certain brazen instruments by means of which they made a loud noise like thunder before a battle. The Catholic Church has turned to a better account this observation in the use of bells.

Bells, however, were not always used to call people to church. Baronius says that they were first introduced by John XIII., in the year 968. We are, however, certain that bells, or whatever was used at the time for calling the faithful to divine service, were blessed in the seventh century.—(Bona, *Liturg. lib. I, c. 26.*)

Now in the blessing of bells several psalms are sung to implore God's mercy and protection. The bell is washed with holy water inside and outside; it is anointed on seven places on the outside, with the oil of Catechumens, and on four places on the inside with Chrism—the bishop or priest delegated by the bishop, saying: “O Lord, sanctify and consecrate this bell, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

The name of some saint is mentioned, under whose invocation the bell is blessed; and the words, “Peace be with you,” are used to set the bell aside for holy and pious purposes, that it may be an instrument of peace, and that the devil may have no power over it.

The bell is then incensed that the prayers, like the incense, may ascend on high before God.

The Gospel taken from the tenth chapter of St. Luke, in which many heard the word of God at the feet of Jesus, is then sung, to show that a principal use of bells is to assemble the people to hear the word of God.

This ceremony may be allegorically applied to the faithful of the Church. The bells are suspended on high, and good Christians, by their virtues, are placed on high, between God and the wicked world.

The bells are heard from afar, and the voice of the good example of faithful Christians should spread far and wide.

The bells are blessed to turn off storms and tempests from the faithful; and the faithful are placed between God and sinners, to be, by fervent prayer, walls of brass, as it were, against the storms of God's anger.

The bells warn the people of their duty and call them to church, and every Christian should, at least by his edifying life, be a bell to warn the sinner of his duty to return to God.

The bell is purified with holy water. The metal of bells came from dark mines and passed through fire to be purified. Every Christian came from the darkness of original sin to the light of grace in baptism, and must pass through the fire of interior and exterior mortification to preserve the grace of God until death.

The bell is anointed with holy oil to consecrate it to God. Every Catholic is anointed with holy oil and chrism in baptism and confirmation, to fill him with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and enkindle in him the fire of charity for his fellow-men.

The bells are incensed. Incense represents the prayers of the faithful; and the prayers of good Catholics should, like incense, ascend daily to heaven to bring down the blessings of God upon themselves and their fellow-men.

In fine, in blessing the bell, a gospel inculcating the hearing of the word of God is read, and it is the duty of every Catholic to learn that divine word, make it known to others as far as possible, and live up to it in order to be saved.

The voice of the bell flies over the fields; it passes over the mountains; it soars over the valleys; it pierces the gloomy forests, and wherever the voice of a blessed bell is heard, it speaks of God to man and calls on man to speak to his God; it reminds him of the love of God in the Incarnation when it is heard in the morning, at noon, and at the time of sunset; it recalls to his mind the love of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament when it announces the Consecration at Mass; it reminds the faithful on Sundays and holy days of obligation to hasten to church, there to unite with one another and with God in prayer; it says to them:

Sundays observe: think, when the bells do chime
T'is angels' music, therefore come in time.

In the cathedral of Reims the music of the bells continues day and night. Before the clock strikes each hour and each quarter of an hour, a chime sends through the atmosphere a sweet and sacred cry of the familiar Litany. At the first quarter it sings "Peccatores" (sinners); at the third, after the interval of half an hour, it continues the prayer begun, and cries, "Te rogamus, audi nos," (We beseech thee, hear us.) At the half hour between these two cries of the heart, it says, "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum" (Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit). This order is every day of the year invariable; but the voice at the hour varies with the festival, and repeats an entire strophe of the hymn, or prose of the solemnity.

During Advent it sings, "Rorate coeli de super, (Shed dew, ye heavens, from above). At Easter it sings, "O filii et filiae," (O sons and daughters). At Pentecost it sings, "Veni Creator Spiritus" (Come, Thou Creator—Breath of God). At Corpus Christi it sings, "Lauda, Sion" (Praise, O Sion). Such are the singularities presented by this music of the bells at Reims.

And now let us remember that the whole country round, at this sound of the bell, as far as it can reach, may often in some sense, become to men of faith a church, so that woods and desert plains behold some solitary worshipers like those whom we see kneeling in churches. An instance is thus related in the 'Magnum Speculum':

The great solemnity of the Assumption was at hand, and the brethren of the granges at Clairvaux were hastening to the abbey. Now, in one of these granges was a certain lay-brother, devout and fearing God, who, though unable through simplicity to learn any of the higher things of religion, was nevertheless especially dear to the Blessed Vjrgin. When the master of the grange selected those who were to go, and those who were to remain, this brother was ordered to stay there in charge of the sheep. Although he desired very much to hear the divine hymns of that festival, yet he did not wish in the least to contradict his superior. Hence his holy devotion, which he feared to lose by the distractions of his earthly occupation, was only enkindled to greater fervor. On the night of the solemnity, as he kept watch over the flocks, he heard the sound of the bells, which called the brethren to the church to sing matins. At that sound his heart became dilated and kindled at the thought of the holy multitude singing the divine praises, and at the interior fervor of each one of them. So he rose up, turned towards the part of the heavens over

the monastery, and said, as well as he could, his usual prayers, that is, repeated again and again the Hail Mary, in order thus to join his brethren in their devotion. The words of the Hail Mary concentrated all the piety of his heart, so much so that he spent the rest of the night in pious rapture. The wonderful graces he received were at the time revealed to St. Bernard. "Be assured," said this great saint to the community, "that there is one of the most simple of our lay brothers whom obedience has detained in the woods, on the mountains in the open air, to whose intense devotion no sublimity of the contemplation of any one amongst us here present in the church can be preferred." At these words all the brethren were filled with joy and admiration, because they understood that nothing done through obedience could be an obstacle to the raising of pure hands in prayer to the Almighty. (Ex lib. de viris illust. Ord. Cisterc. ap. id. 533.)

The voice of blessed bells, when heard at the funeral service, begs our prayers for the dear departed; it speaks to us in their name in piteous accents.

The voice of the bell speaks to the sinner and calls him to repentance. When it announces the death of a fervent Catholic, it says to the sinner: Once you were so good and innocent. You were so happy in the days of innocent childhood. Now you are living in sin and enmity with God, return to him by sincere repentance.

Blessed bells, so softly pealing,
 Your sweet voice awakes the forms of buried years.
 Blissful thoughts come o'er me stealing,
 With fond feeling;
 Thoughts that open the long-sealed fount of tears,
 Thoughts of childhood's holy hours,
 When life's path was strewn with flow'rs,
 When the altar shone with tapers gay,
 On the happy first Communion-day!

It happened not long ago that a married man when about to kill himself, heard the voice of blessed bells; it spoke to him most tenderly, and he replied to it in words like the following:

Blessed bells, your tones so tender
 Oft have soothed my soul when racked with grief and pain.
 Could your voice to my soul render
 All its splendor
 In bright childhood's sinless days again!
 Counting e'er the pulse of time
 With your solemn silv'ry chime;
 Oft you spoke to me, in sin asleep,
 You now say to me: o'er thy sins weep!

This man was converted by the voice of blessed bells. He went to the church, made a good confession of his sins, and ever afterwards led an edifying life.

Thus we see that God bestows the blessings asked by his Church in consecrating a bell: "And when its melody shall sound in the ears of the people, may the devotion of faith grow in them, that whoever shall assemble at its sound, may always be free to avoid the temptations of the enemy, and to follow the teachings of Catholic faith." (Pont. Rom. de Bened. Campanae.)

Now, those objects which are blessed or consecrated by the Church for the divine service or the use of the faithful are called sacramentals, because they bear a certain resemblance to the sacraments. There is, however, a great difference between sacramentals and the sacraments. The sacraments are instituted by Christ as the means of grace which they infallibly convey to all those who receive them worthily; but the sacramentals are instituted by the Church, and they do not of themselves give grace, but by virtue of the prayers of the Church they help to excite in the soul the good dispositions which obtain for us the remission of

venial sin, and other blessings. For instance, holy water which we take on entering a church, does not remit venial sin directly as the sacrament of penance does, but *indirectly, by way of impetration*; for the Church, by the blessing of the water, obtains for the faithful who use it, the grace to make acts of repentance and love, by which venial sins are cancelled. This is easily seen from the prayers which the Church uses when she blesses the water.

Blessing of the Salt.

EXORCISM.

I exorcise thee, O creature of salt, by the living ✠ God, by the true ✠ God, by the holy ✠ God, by that God who, by the prophet Elisha, commanded thee to be cast into the water, to cure its barrenness, that thou mayest, by this exorcism, be more beneficial to the faithful, and become to all that make use of thee, healthful both to soul and body, and that in what place soever thou art sprinkled, all illusions and wickedness and crafty wiles of Satan may be chased away and depart from that place, as well as every unclean spirit, commanded in his name who is come to judge the living and the dead, and destroy the world by fire. Amen.

Exorcism of Water.

I exorcise thee, O creature of water, in the name of God ✠ the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ ✠ his only Son, Our Lord, and in the virtue of the Holy ✠ Ghost, that thou mayest, by this exorcism, be able to chase away all power of the enemy, and cast him out, and put him to flight with all his apostate angels, by virtue of the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who is to come to judge the living and the dead, and destroy the world by fire. Amen.

PRAYER.

O God, who for the benefit of mankind hast made use of the substance of water in the greatest sacraments, mercifully hear our prayers, and impart the virtue of thy blessing ✠ to this element, prepared by many kinds of purifications that this thine creature, made use of in thy mysteries, may receive the effects of thy divine grace, for chasing away devils, and curing diseases, and that whosoever shall be sprinkled with this water in houses or places of the faithful, may be free from all uncleanness, and from everything hurtful.—Let no pestilential spirit, nor infectious air dwell there. Let all the snares of the hidden enemy depart, and may whatever envies the safety or repose of the inhabitants be put to flight by the sprinkling of this water. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

From these prayers we learn what graces and blessings the Church asks of God for those who make a devout use of holy water. The Church asks similar graces and favors for those who make a pious use of other objects blessed by her. Holy water and other sacramentals, therefore, do not produce any grace by their own virtue; but by virtue of the prayers of the Church, they can obtain particular graces, and even the remission of venial sins, for those who make use of them in a spirit of faith and repentance.

The Church also blesses persons, new houses and ships, arms and banners. She blesses especially churches and cemeteries, and thus converts them into holy places.

On the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin the Church blesses candles, because it was on that day that our Saviour, who is the Light of the World, first appeared in the temple.

Again, on the first day of Lent the Church blesses ashes and distributes them, in order to remind us that

we shall all return into dust and ashes, from which our bodies came.

Again, she blesses palms on Palm-Sunday to commemorate the triumphant entry of our dear Saviour into Jerusalem.

After the example of Jesus Christ, the Church also blesses bread, wine, and the fruits of the earth, so that all things may contribute to the welfare of those who love God, and that the blessing of the Lord may extend to all his creatures.

By using blessed objects we share in the prayers and benedictions which the Church has pronounced over them, and from which they derive a very special virtue. This good and tender mother generally prays in her benedictions that the Lord would deign to turn away the scourge of his anger, that he would defend us from our enemies, and that he would grant us peace and happiness both of body and soul.

Of the Sacramentals, that of holy water is most frequently used. When used with faith and devotion, it chases away the devil, turns away sickness, and other calamities and, even remits venial sin, as we have said, when properly used by those who repent of it, and are also in the state of grace.

Father Ferrerio relates that a monk of Cluni, at the hour of death, saw his room full of devils; but on sprinkling it with holy water, they immediately disappeared. (Hist. p. 183.) St. Anselm restored sight to a blind man by holy water.

At the time of St. Vincent Ferrer an immense swarm of locusts threatened to destroy the whole harvest at Murzia in Spain. The Saint together with the other priests of the city went in procession and sprinkled the fields with holy

water. Next day the locusts were all seen lying about dead, and the harvest of that year was plentiful.

The good Christian, therefore, makes a pious use of holy water. He takes it when in church and in his house; he takes it with devotion, begging God to purify his soul more and more by the merit of the Blood of Jesus Christ, and to deliver him from all dangers. When he is sick he sprinkles his bed and room with it; and when he comes to die, his mortal remains are sprinkled with it; so also is his grave in which his body rests in hope, awaiting its glorious resurrection.

Exorcisms.

We have already shown that the Church has received power from Jesus Christ to cast out devils and restrain them from injuring any of God's creatures. The Church often makes use of this power. She has instituted certain rites and prayers to be used by the bishops or priests in casting out devils from possessed persons. In a little book "Triumph of the Blessed Sacrament," I have related how Almighty God permitted evil spirits to possess a certain person, called Nicola Aubry, of the town of Vervins, in France. The possession took place in 1565 and lasted for several months.

When the strange circumstances of Nicola's possession became known everywhere, several Calvinist preachers came with their followers, to "expose this popish cheat," as they said. On their entrance, the devil saluted them mockingly, called them by name, and told them that they had come in *obedience to him*. One of the preachers took his Protestant prayer-book, and began to read it with a very solemn face. The devil laughed at him, and, putting on a most comical face, he said: "Ho! ho! my good

friend, do you intend to expel *me* with your prayers and hymns? Do you think that they will cause me any pain? Don't you know that they are mine? *I* helped to compose them!"

"I will expel thee in the name of God," said the preacher, solemnly.

"You!" said the devil, mockingly. "You will *not* expel me either in the name of *God*, or in the name of the *devil*. Did you ever hear, then, of one devil driving out another?"

"I am not a devil," said the preacher, angrily. "I am a servant of Christ."

"A servant of Christ, indeed!" said Satan, with a sneer. "What! I tell you, you are worse than *I* am. *I* believe, and *you* do not want to believe. Do you suppose that *you* can expel me from the body of this miserable wretch? Ha! go first and expel all the devils that are in your own heart!"

The preacher took his leave, somewhat discomfited. On going away, he said, turning up the whites of his eyes: "Oh Lord, I pray thee, assist this poor creature!"

"And I pray Lucifer," cried the spirit, "that he may never leave you, but may always keep you firmly in his power, as he does now. Go about your business now. You are *all mine*, and I am your master." So they went away. They had seen and heard more than they wanted.

One night Augustin de Moustier, the uncle of Nicola, remained watching beside her. As he was all alone, and the time dragged on heavily, he thought he would have some amusement. So he put on the priest's cassock, took the ritual in one hand, and in the other the holy-water-sprinkler, and went over to the bed in which Nicola lay quietly sleeping.

“Now come, old boy,” said Augustin, laughingly, “come! I will exorcise you.” Scarcely had he uttered these words when Satan, who fully controlled the possessed woman, sprang upon him like a tiger, seized him by the throat, and dashed his head against the walls, the tables, and chairs, till at length the poor exorcist, half dead with pain and terror, tore off the cassock, and rushed out of the room as fast as his legs could carry him.

“Aha!” cried the devil; “don’t you know, how I mauled those vile Jews that tried to expel me in the name of that God whom Paul preached?”

Satan here evidently refers to what is related in the Acts of the Apostles, xix. 13—17. Some Jewish exorcists tried to drive the devil out of a possessed man by adjuring him “in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached.”

The devil answered in a rage: “Jesus I know, and Paul I know too, but who are you?” And, seizing two of them, he threw them down and tore their clothes, and beat them unmercifully, till at last they ran away all torn and bleeding.

The power of expelling devils is not in Protestant preachers. This power is found only in the Catholic church, because she alone is the true church of Jesus Christ. The bishop of Laon made use of it, and expelled the evil spirits for ever from Nicola Aubry. (See volume “Holy Eucharist and Penance,” p. 76 to 91.)

Agnus Dei.

An *Agnus Dei* is a medallion of white wax, which the benediction of the Sovereign Pontiff elevates to the dignity of what we call *Sacramentals*. It is oval in form and may be of any size. On one side it is stamped with the image of a Lamb bearing a cross, with the inscription, “Ecce,

agn. Dei, qui. tol. pec. mundi." (Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world); on the other, with the image of the Blessed Virgin, or that of the Founder of an Order, an illustrious Martyr, or any other great Saint whom the Consecrating Pontiff honors in a special manner. The name of the Pope that blessed it, date of the ceremony, and sometimes too the Pontifical Arms may be seen thereon.

The *white, pure, virgin wax*, is the symbol of the nature the eternal Son of God assumed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in the most chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The *Holy Chrism* represents charity, the most eminent of virtues; the *Balm* is the good odor of Jesus Christ, which Christians, by their exemplary conduct, ought to spread everywhere.

The Lamb, stamped on the consecrated wax, is the emblem of the Saviour of the world: he is our Passover; he is the model of innocence and simplicity; he invites us to practise, after his example, meekness and humility. "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

The *Cross* which the Lamb is represented carrying, is the sign of our Redemption, the pledge of our Salvation. "Whoever wishes to be my disciple, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me." The *Book*, on which the Lamb reposes, is that *Eternal Book* in which are recorded our good and bad actions. On beholding it, let us think of our last end, and let us repeat, with all the sincerity of our hearts, the invocation of the blessed Jerome Emilian: "Most sweet Jesus, be not my Judge but my Saviour;" or let us say, with another saint: "Mercy, my Jesus, mercy!"

No one but the Pope blesses the Agnus Dei, and performs this ceremony but once every seven years, on Easter-Thursday. It is a well known fact that the Roman Pon-

tiffs frequently blessed the Agnus Deis just before they went themselves to martyrdom; that in the glorious, triumphant days of the Church, as well as in her hour of trial, these heroes never forgot to bless the Agnus Dei; and that even in our own days, Pope Pius IX. blessed them at a moment,*) when betrayed, abandoned and robbed, he placed all his trust, and the salvation of Peter's bark in the hands of the Lamb who is the victim of sacrifice, and whose vicar and type he so truly was.

In this solemn blessing he prays that those who use the Agnus Dei devoutly may be preserved from pestilence, earthquakes, shipwrecks, sudden death, disasters of hail, the dangers of storms, the fury of tempests, the attacks of the wicked, contagion of every kind, fires and inundations; that mothers may have a safe deliverance in time of child-birth; that they may bring happiness and prosperity to families; to all the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost. The following are some of the prayers used in the blessing of the Agnus Deis.

Let us pray.—O God, author of all sanctification, who didst favorably look upon the lamb offered in sacrifice by Abel, who didst wish that a ram entangled in the briars should be offered instead of Isaac who was about to be immolated as a type of our Redemption, and who didst command Moses to offer continual sacrifice in water, we humbly beseech Thee to vouchsafe to bless ✠ and sanctify ✠ these waxen figures, stamped with the image of the Immaculate Lamb, that their presence may avert tornadoes and destructive hailstorms, and guard against the violence of tempests, the fury of the winds, and the fatal effects of lightning. And as the destroying Angel at the sight of the blood with

*) The Canonization of the Japanese Martyrs—also during the Vatican Council.

which Thy people had sprinkled their thresholds and door posts, passed them by without inflicting injury on them, so may the sight of these images terrify and put to flight evil spirits, and may they save from unprovided death, guard against the attacks of their enemies, protect against every adversity all who devoutly carry them on their person, banish from them all troublesome phantoms, shield them from pestilence and contagious disease, epilepsy, and every violent sickness, preserve them from storms at sea, from inundations or conflagrations; we beseech Thee, O God, to grant these graces through the intercession of Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with Thee, in union with the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. *R. Amen.*

Let us pray.—O Lord Jesus Christ, who art the true lamb, sacrificed on the altar of the Cross, for the salvation of the world, and who, by Thy death hast delivered the human race from eternal death and the power of the devil, and restored them to life, vouchsafe to bless ✠, and sanctify ✠, and consecrate ✠, these waxen images of the Lamb, that those who piously, and with a view of reverencing and honoring Thy Name, carry them on their person, may be preserved from sudden death and the wickedness and artful deceits of hell; and may the pains of women in labor be so mitigated that the mother may be delivered with safety to herself and her child, through the merits of Thy Passion, Who livest and reignest in union with the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *R. Amen.*

Let us pray.—O benignant Spirit, who renderest the waters fruitful, and by the flood of Thy Graces, sanctifiest them, and changest their bitterness into sweetness, vouchsafe to bless ✠, sanctify ✠, and consecrate ✠, these waxen figures of the Lamb which we are about to immerse in

water and holy chrism, that all those who piously wear them, being fortified by the strength of Thy virtue, may rejoice in Thy consolation, who art the true comforter and who livest and reignest with the Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. *R.* Amen.

Let us pray.—We beseech thy immense clemency, O Almighty God, that those who bear on their persons these spotless lambs, formed of virgin wax, images of Thy only begotten Son, our Lord's Incarnation, accomplished, not by human action, but by divine power, may by means of these figures which we have consecrated by the sign of the cross, by blessed water, and by holy chrism, be preserved from all assaults of wicked spirits, and also from conflagrations, inundations and lightnings, mothers from miscarriages, and all from other dangers and diseases; and may they finally depart this life, free from every sin, and rejoice for ever in the next, with Thee, who, in perfect Trinity, livest and reignest, one God, world without end. *R.* Amen.

The Agnus Deis may be considered as the most efficacious of the Sacramentals. By reserving their consecration to the representative of Christ, by using in their consecration the holy chrism with which she anoints the altars, priests and bishops; by establishing especial prayers for their consecration, and an especial dignity for the priest appointed to have a particular care of them, the Church shows us, clearly enough, the great value she attaches to them.

The Agnus Deis are not simply, like holy images, the occasions of good thoughts, of generous resolutions, but being clothed, in some way, through the benediction of the Sovereign Pontiff, with certain spiritual and temporal graces, they have, in many instances, visibly produced the effects for which they were consecrated,

An Ordo of the eleventh century compares the efficacy of the Agnus Dei to the blood of the Lamb, with which in obedience to the divine command, the Israelites marked their door-posts. "Like the blood of the Lamb which saved the Jews from the sword of the exterminating angel who desolated the houses of Egypt, the image of the spotless Lamb and of his cross, placed on our hearts, will parry the blows of adversity and secure to us the liberty of the children of God."

There are many facts, attesting their power to arrest the sudden and destructive overflow of rivers, to extinguish terrific conflagrations, to procure for mothers a happy deliverance, in difficult childbirth, to protect, in the fierce strife of the battle-field, the soldiers who piously wore them, on their breasts! We read in the life of St. Pius V., that this Pope, in a certain year of his reign, when the long and copious rains, and rapid melting of the snow swelled the Tiber to such an extent that it overflowed its banks, and threatened the Eternal City with a most terrible inundation, ordered public prayers and fasts to avert the dreadful calamity. All was in vain; the impetuous torrent remained unchecked in its destructive course. Moved in his very inmost soul, by the heart-rending accounts brought to him, the holy Pontiff hastened in person to the scene of the disaster, where, surrounded by those who had lost or were about to lose their all by the inundation, he united his heart, and voice with theirs, in imploring the mercy of God, and then seized, as it were, by a sudden inspiration, he threw an Agnus Dei into the violent torrent. The waters were instantaneously checked; they rapidly receded, and, to the unbounded joy of the endangered inhabitants, the river was again confined within its usual limits.*)

*) Vita S. Pii V. Lib. V. p. 201. Edit. Romæ.

Sixtus Quintus had several Agnus Deis placed on the pinnacle of the obelisk of the Vatican, as a protection against the lightning, and the thunder bolt has ever respected this monolith which can boast an existence of over twenty centuries.*)

In this, the Sovereign Pontiff only imitated the example set him by his predecessors, and especially Innocent III., who for precisely the same purpose, desired to place with his own hands an Agnus Dei in the tower, which, at present, bears the name of *Tower of Nero*. †)

The devotion of the Agnus Dei is contemporaneous with the apostolic times.

The first Christians had the pious custom of carrying about them the image of a lamb; when led to torture, or to death, by their cruel persecutors, they devoutly and tenderly kissed this sacred image, and then, like the divine Lamb himself, they allowed themselves to be dragged to the slaughter, without opening their lips to utter the slightest complaint. This pledge of a happy immortality was even laid in the tomb with the heroic Christian man or woman, who had fought the good fight, kept the faith to the last, and had left this life, marked with the sign of God's children. *Accepistis arrham incorruptionis et signati estis oves mei gregis.* ‡)

*) Muratori *annal. d'Italia*, ann. 1586.

†) *Life of Innocent III.*

‡) When preparing the ground to lay the foundation of the Basilica of the Vatican, the workmen discovered under that part which is at present the Sacristy, the tomb of the Empress Mary, daughter of Stillicon, and wife of Honorius. On opening this sarcophagus, they found a silver casket, containing an Agnus Dei, having, on one side, the images of the four archangels, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and Uriel; on the others, the figure of a lamb, with the inscription: *Maria nostra clementissima, Laur. Lurius in comm. rerum orbis anni 1544.*

The master of St. Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, never lay down to rest, without applying his lips to this miraculous symbol, and pressing it to his heart. St. Louis, King of France, so highly esteemed this precious gift of the Vicar of Christ, and desired so ardently to show his people his appreciation of it, that he ordered the master of his mint to coin a gold piece, bearing, on one side, the image of the Divine Lamb. *)

John, usually styled the Great, King of Sweden, instituted in honor of the Lamb, an Order of Chivalry, under the title and wearing the emblem of the *Agnus Dei*.

St. Charles Borromeo showed a special veneration for the *Agnus Dei*. He gave, in reference to this devotion, some excellent instructions to the faithful of his diocese. He orders the *Agnus Dei* to be kept in a suitable place; he highly approves of the custom of wearing it, encased in a little reliquary, on the breast. As a whole *Agnus Dei* requires a large reliquary, which it would be too inconvenient to wear, it will do to have a small portion of it; for in the Brief, sent with the *Agnus Dei* to the Emperor of Constantinople, Pope Urban V. says: That a small portion of it is as efficacious as the whole.

“Pars minor tantum, tota valet integra quantum.”

An excellent method of honoring the *Agnus Dei* would be respectfully to kiss it, every day, recite before it a *Pater* and *Ave* for the Pope, and repeat the invocation suggested by Pope Urban V. to the Emperor of Constantinople:

Agnus Dei, miserere mei,

Qui crimina tollis, misere nobis.

Lamb of God, have mercy on me;

Thou, who takest away our sins, have mercy on us.

*) In those days, certain pieces of money went by the name of: *Agnel d'or*—florin à l'agnel—denier à l'agnel—equivalent, respectively, in modern coin, to—15 francs—2 francs—5 centimes.

To this method of honoring the Agnus Dei we must join the imitation of the virtues of the Lamb of God as the best means to make ourselves worthy of all the temporal and spiritual blessings attached to the Agnus Dei by the solemn prayers of the Roman Pontiff.

Scapular.

(For the explanation of the devotion of the Scapular, see my work, "Devotion of the Holy Rosary," p. 310-333.

CHAPTER II.

PRAYER.

What is prayer?

Prayer is the elevation of the mind and heart to God, either to adore him, or to praise him, or to thank him, or to beg of him blessings for soul and body.

The word "prayer" is used in two senses. In its widest sense it means any elevation of the soul to God, or a communing with God. Man has in his own nature a likeness to God. Human reason—the soul—is the likeness in man of the Divine Reason. Hence nothing hinders inter-communion between the reason of God and the reason of man, for like communes with like.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Now, there are many persons who raise their heart and soul to God by way of affections. They exclaim, "O excess of love! One heart is too little to love Thee, my Jesus; one tongue is not enough to praise Thy good-

ness. O my Jesus, how great are my obligations to Thee! No, I will no longer live in myself; but Jesus alone shall live in me; he is mine, and I am his. O love! O love! No more sins! I will never forget the goodness of God, and the mercies of my Saviour. I love Thee, O infinite Majesty! my God, I wish to love nothing but Thee," etc.

Devout affections of the heart like these, are not, strictly speaking, what is meant by prayer. Hence the word "prayer" in its narrower sense, in which it is more commonly used, means the act of addressing ourselves to God for the purpose of asking of him those things we need.

As devout affections of the heart do not contain the least petition for any particular grace, the soul will not become over rich with the gifts of God if this manner of prayer alone be adopted. If a beggar were to say to a millionaire: "Oh, how magnificent is your house! how splendid your furniture! how elegant your grounds! how vast your wealth!" it would hardly induce the rich man to give him an alms. But should the poor man say: "My good sir, be kind enough to assist me in my poverty; please give me some money, some clothes, some provisions," etc., then the rich man, if charitably disposed, will not fail to comply with the poor man's request. In like manner our Lord is not bound to bestow graces upon us merely because we admire his perfections, goodness, or other attributes. But if we say to him: "Lord, make me understand better the excess of Thy love; grant that my heart may never love anything but Thee, that it may ever be Thine; make me always seek only Thee; let everything else be disgusting to me," expressions like these being petitions or prayers, in which we ask for particular graces, our Lord Jesus Christ, on account of his promise, feels bound to grant them.

Although devout affections are good, and often quite natural to the soul, yet, generally speaking, petitions are better, far more profitable, and more conformable to the examples taught us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Church in her authorized devotions, and all the saints. Read the prayer of our Lord for his disciples in the Gospel of St. John, (Chap. xvii.) or any prayer of the Church, or of any saint, and the truth of this will be seen at once. Read the prayer which St. Alphonsus, who is justly termed the Apostle of Prayer, addresses to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and which commences thus: "O my Jesus, Thou who art the true life, make me die to the world to live only to Thee; my Redeemer, by the flames of Thy love destroy in me all that is displeasing to Thee, and give me a true desire to gratify and please Thee in all things," etc.

The venerable Paul Segneri used to say, that at one time he used to employ the time of prayer in reflections and affections; "but God [these are his own words] afterwards enlightened me, and thenceforward I endeavored to spend my time in making petitions; and if there is any good in me, I ascribe it to this manner of recommending myself to God." Let us do the same. It may not be out of place to suggest that a prayer-book, in which the prayers are put up in the form of petitions, is to be most recommended.

Is prayer necessary for salvation?

Yes; God made prayer a necessary means of salvation, both for sinners to recover his grace and friendship, and for the just to be able to persevere in his grace to the end.

God has made prayer 1) a *necessary means of salvation*, and therefore, 2) by a *formal precept*, obliges all men to pray.

I. To understand this truth in its full bearing, we must consider,

1) That we cannot be saved unless we fulfil the will of God.

2) That we are unable to do God's will unless we are assisted by divine grace.

3) That we obtain this grace by prayer; that consequently we must pray in order to be saved.

First. I say we cannot be saved unless we do the will of God. The Lord declared his will in express terms, when he said to Adam: "And of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." (Gen. ii, 17.)

By this commandment man was clearly given to understand that the continuation of his happiness, for time and eternity, depended upon his obedience to the will of God. To remain free from irregular affections and disorderly passions, and to transmit his happiness to his posterity, was entirely in his power. If he made a right use of his liberty, by always following the law of God; if he preserved unsullied the image and likeness of his Creator and heavenly Father; if, in fine, he made a proper use of the creatures confided to his care, he should then receive the crown of life-everlasting as a reward for his fidelity. But if he swerved even for a moment from this loving will of God, he would subject himself to the law of God's justice, which would not fail to execute the threatened punishment.

But did God, perhaps, afterwards, in consideration of the abundant merits of the Redemption, lay down other and easier conditions for man's happiness and salvation? No; he did not change these conditions in the least. Man's happiness still depended on his obedience to the divine will. "Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to

do and keep all his commandments, the Lord thy God will make thee higher than all the nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come unto thee and overtake thee, yet so if thou hear his precepts." (Deut. xxviii. 1, 2.) And our divine Saviour says: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John xv. 15.) And again: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) He himself gave the example, having been obedient even unto the death of the cross, thereby teaching all men that their salvation depends on their persevering obedience to the will of their heavenly Father.

But to be always mindful of God's will; always to honor, appreciate and love it above all things; always to embrace and follow it punctually and promptly; always to understand clearly, that whatever is contrary to God's will can never be good or meritorious, but must bring death to the soul; to return to his divine will after having strayed away from it—all this is not the work of our weak nature, but is entirely the effect of divine grace; for, if faith teaches us that God made all things very good, it also teaches us that they cannot remain so without God's assistance; otherwise they would cease to be dependent on him. This is true of all God's creatures, but especially of man, who, being endowed with free-will, has it in his power to obey or transgress the law of God.

On this account Jesus Christ says: "Without me you can do nothing." On these words, St. Augustine remarks that Jesus Christ did not say: "Without me you cannot bring anything to perfection"; but he said: "You cannot even do anything." He means to say, that without his grace we are not even able to commence any good work.

“If this light of faith,” said our Lord to St. Catherine of Sienna, “shineth on thee, thou wilt understand that I, thy God, know better how to promote thy welfare, and that I have a greater desire to do so than thou thyself, and that thou, without my grace, *neither wouldst nor couldst promote it.*”

This very thing is taught by St. Paul. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians he writes: “Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.” (Chap. iii. 5.) The Apostle means to say, that of ourselves we are not even able to think of any good or meritorious thing. Now, if we are not able to think of anything good, how much less able are we to wish for anything good. “It is God,” he writes, in his Epistle to the Philippians, “who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to his good will.” (Chap. ii. 13.)

The same thing had been declared by God long before, through the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: “*I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments and do them.*” (Chap. xxxvi. 27.)

Consequently, according to the teachings of St. Leo I., man works only as much as God, in his grace, enables him to do. Hence it is an article of our holy faith that no one can do the least meritorious work without God’s particular assistance.

But shall we, then, say that our first parents could not help losing the grace of God, and the many natural and supernatural gifts which they had received? Shall we say that when we sin the fault lies with God, rather than with us, because he neglects to assist us? No! by no means; such an assertion would be a blasphemy. It is therefore certain—

1. That man is good in the sight of God, and has well grounded hopes of salvation, only in proportion as he lives up to the will of God.

2. That man cannot, by his own strength, keep his will good, so as always to follow God's will under all circumstances.

3. That God must therefore have given man an infallible means, by the use of which he can preserve his innocence, and by the neglect of which he will certainly fall into sin.

The use of this means must be considered as an essential truth in the way of salvation. Our reason tells us that we should call upon the assistance of another, when we are unable to help ourselves. Adam and Eve knew this truth very well; but neglecting to call upon God's assistance in the hour of temptation, they lacked the grace necessary to enable them to keep the commandments of God. Hence, they fell through their own fault.

We may, therefore, fairly conclude that the whole mystery of man's salvation and sanctification depends entirely on the constant and proper use of this great means of prayer. "As God, in the natural order," says St. Alphonsus, "ordained that man should be born naked, and in want of many of the necessaries of life, and as at the same time he has given him hands and understanding to provide for all his wants, so also in the supernatural order man is born incapable of remaining good, and obtaining salvation by his own strength; but God, in his infinite goodness, grants to every one the grace of prayer, and obliges all men to make constant use of this grace, in order thereby to obtain all other necessary graces."

II. In almost every page of Holy Writ God exhorts us to observe his commandments. In like manner he con-

tinually urges us to pray, for it is by prayer that we are enabled to keep his commandments. God speaks of the obligation of prayer in the clearest language, on almost every page of Holy Scripture. "Seek ye the Lord," he says by the Royal Prophet, "and be strengthened: seek his face evermore." (Ps. civ. 4.) "Let nothing keep thee from praying always." (Eccles. xviii. 22.)

What God inculcated so clearly in the Old Law, is still more clearly and more forcibly inculcated by Jesus Christ in the New Law. "And he spoke a parable to them, that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke xviii. 1.) And again: "Watch ye and pray." (Matt. xxvii. 41.)

This precept to pray always, and not to faint, was also taught, and emphatically inculcated, in his name, by the Apostles. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer," says St. Peter. (Acts vi. 4.) "By all prayer, and supplication," writes St. Paul to the Ephesians, "praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints." (Ephes. vi. 18.) And again: "Be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving." And to the Thessalonians he writes: "Pray without ceasing." (I. Thessal. v. 17.) And to his beloved disciple Timothy he writes: "I will, therefore, that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands without anger and contention." (I. Tim. ii. 8.)

Can the necessity of prayer be more clearly and more forcibly expressed than it is in these passages of Holy Scripture? It is not said anywhere that it is good to pray, that it is advisable or that it is useful to pray; no! it is said in the clearest language, "*You must pray.*" It is not said: "You must pray *now* and *then*;" no! it is said: "You must pray *always*;" "you must pray *without ceasing*;" "you must not *faint in prayer*;" "you must *watch in it* at

all times and in all places." All these expressions imply, according to all the theologians of the Church, *a formal precept* of prayer, so that, in their opinion, a man who would not pray for a month could not be excused from mortal sin.

Had we, then, no other evidence of the necessity of prayer than the fact that Jesus Christ and his apostles have always inculcated it so earnestly, this fact alone should be sufficient to convince us of its necessity; for just as we firmly believe that there are three Persons in God, simply because Jesus Christ has taught us this truth, so, in like manner, ought we to be firmly convinced of the necessity of prayer, for the simple reason that Jesus Christ himself has taught it in the clearest language; for being truth itself, he could never have taught us anything as necessary which was not really so.

But as there is no more persuasive way of instruction than example, our Lord Jesus Christ taught us the necessity of prayer by his divine example, even before he taught it by his word. Is it not strange, indeed, to behold the Son of God, eternal wisdom itself, who came into this world to teach men the way of salvation, who, in his childhood, might have preached and wrought miracles for the conversion of sinners, just as easily as he did at the age of thirty years; is it not strange, I say, to see him spend thirty years in retirement and obscurity, unknown to the world, and losing, according to our manner of judging, his most precious time?

Now God is infinite wisdom, and always acts reasonably. Why, then, did he act in this strange manner? It was in order to give us an example which we should imitate. During those thirty years, the Son of God was not idle; he spent his time in the practice of virtue and in continual prayer.

Now the Son of God does not need pray for himself. He prayed in order to teach us, by his divine example, the absolute necessity of prayer. Thirty years of his life were consecrated to this holy exercise, and three years only to the instruction of the people, and even of this short period of three years he spent the greater part in prayer. How often did he not say to his disciples: "Withdraw a little from the multitude"? And for what purpose? In order to be more at liberty to pray. Moreover, do we not read in the Gospel that, after having spent the day in instructing the people, he would retire to a lonely mountain, there to spend the whole night in prayer? "And it came to pass that he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in prayer of God." (Luke vi. 12.) This was a custom of our Saviour, as we may gather from the fact that Judas, the traitor, did not go with the soldiers to seek him in the city of Jerusalem, but went straightway to the Mount of Olives, because he knew that Jesus was accustomed to go thither to spend the night in prayer.

Again, wishing to be glorified by his Heavenly Father, he prayed for it. And lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son." (John xi. 1.) On this prayer, Father Crasset, S. J., remarks: "Jesus prays his Father to glorify his body. Now was not this his due?" Had he not merited it? Could his Father refuse him! Why, then, did he ask it? It is because God had decreed not to grant any favor to man, not even to his Divine Son, except through prayer, which is the channel through which all graces flow. "Ask, my Son," saith he, "for all the nations of the earth, and I will give them to thee for thy inheritance." Jesus merited the empire of the whole universe, and yet he obtained it only after asking for it.

“Even in heaven,” as St. Paul assures us, “he is continually interceding for us.” He has been doing this for more than eighteen hundred years, and he will continue to do so to the end of the world.

He likewise intercedes for us in the Sacrifice of the Mass; for Mass, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, is a sacrifice of impetration, in which Jesus Christ asks of his heavenly Father everything necessary for our spiritual and temporal welfare. Now, if we consider that Mass is said at every hour of the day, it follows that Jesus Christ, for more than eighteen hundred years, has been continually praying for us under the sacramental species, and that he will continue to do so at every hour until the end of the world.

Truly, if this example of our Saviour does not convince us of the necessity of prayer, it will be in vain to look for more striking proofs in confirmation of this truth. “Jesus Christ,” remarks St. Augustine, “is the Lord of heaven and earth; he is happy in himself and in need of nothing, and yet he prays; shall, then, man, who is misery itself, not pray? Jesus Christ, our divine physician, lies prostrate in prayer—and shall we, who are sick in body and soul, think it too much to kneel down to pray? Jesus Christ is innocence itself, and yet he prays; we are laden with sin, and shall we not pray? Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead, prays, and shall we not pray who are so guilty in his sight?”

St. Augustine wishes to say that Jesus Christ came into this world to instruct us both by his words and example: “I have given you an example, that, as I have done, so do you also.” Now to disregard this divine example is to forsake the order of God’s goodness, in order to fall into that of his justice; it is to renounce his friend-

ship, in order to incur his just anger. To neglect to follow our Lord's example, is to stray away on dangerous paths; it is to turn all our pleasures into bitterness; it is to bring all our plans to nought; it is to make all our labors useless; it is to make even our very prosperity a chastisement; it is to make our trials and afflictions a source of despair, and our very existence a hell.

On the contrary, to follow this example is to place ourselves in perpetual peace and security; it is to oblige the Wisdom of God to govern us, his Power to defend us, his Goodness to console us, his Grace to sanctify us, his Mercy to encompass us, his Sanctity to purify us, his Providence to preserve us from evil and to sustain us in good, and to make all go well with us in time and in eternity.

CHAPTER III.

Prayer a necessary means of salvation for sinners.

There was once a little girl living in one of our large cities. She had a small rosebush in a flowerpot — it was her only companion. She loved it dearly. The street or lane in which she lived was very narrow, and the houses were high, so that not a ray of blessed sunshine ever stole into her dark, mouldy room. Now, the child feared that the little flower might die. So she took it every day in her arms, went into the yard, and placed it in the sunshine and watched it with the greatest joy, while the little flower drank in the warm sunlight.

The sinner must imitate this little child. His rosebush, in which he must take the greatest interest, is his immortal soul. He lives in an atmosphere that is dark with sin, the sweet light of grace penetrates his soul so seldom. The plant that grows in a cellar looks pale and sickly: so does the soul without the light of grace. What is he to do? He must open his heart to God in prayer, as the flower-bud opens its calyx to the sun. Then the Holy Ghost will fill his heart with sweet, heavenly thoughts and desires, just as the sun gives to the rose its lovely hues and the sweet fragrance.

A certain young man, named Lanfranc, was greatly devoted to the study of human sciences, and was renowned for his learning; but, unfortunately, he was careless about

the welfare of his immortal soul. One day he was going through a forest on his way to Rouen in France. Suddenly he was attacked by a gang of robbers. They seized him, robbed him of all he had, tied his hands, bandaged his eyes, and finally left him among the brushwood, far away from the main road. Lanfranc called for help, but in vain. Night came on; he was helpless and alone in the vast forest. He now began to review his past life. He wished to pray to God, but he did not know in what manner. Prayer was something he had never practised.

“O my God!” said he at last, “I have spent so much of my time in profane studies, I have exhausted mind and body in these studies, and yet I have never learned how to pray to thee. O Lord! help me this time. Deliver me from this danger, and I promise thee that, with the help of thy grace, I shall employ the rest of my life in serving only thee.”

The whole night was thus spent in the forest. Toward daybreak he heard some travellers passing. He began to cry for help with all his might. At first the travellers were terrified, imagining they heard the cry of some wild beast. At last, recognizing the voice of a human being, they drew near, and finding out who it was, they untied him and brought him to the road. Lanfranc begged the travellers to show him the way to the nearest monastery. They did so and departed. Lanfranc soon found it: it was the famous Abbey of Bec. He became afterward (A. D. 1050) Archbishop of Canterbury, in England.

Lanfranc represents the poor sinner, who, deprived of God's grace, is helpless and abandoned. He is unable, of his own strength, to rise from the state of sin and recover the friendship of God. “If any one,” says the Council of Trent, “asserts that, without the preceding inspiration and

grace of the Holy Ghost, man can believe, hope, love, or repent in such a manner as he ought, let him be anathema." Consider well the words: "Repent in such a manner as he ought." Judas, too, repented, for Holy Scripture says of him: "Then Judas, who betrayed Jesus, seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xvii, 3.) But this was not such repentance as is required for justification; it proceeded only from natural motives, and consequently led to despair. "And Judas," as Holy Scripture says, "went and hanged himself with a halter." (Matt. xxvii, 5.) We can indeed fall into sin without any assistance; but rise from sin we cannot, except by the special assistance of God. I can pluck out my eyes; but to set them in again properly, is beyond my power. I can likewise lose the grace of God; but to recover it without God's assistance, is more than I can do. St. Peter remained chained in prison until an angel came and said to him, "Arise," and the chains fell off from his hands. (Acts xii, 7.) Had St. Peter not been awakened by the angel, he would not have thought of rising; and should he have thought of it, he would not have been able to free himself from his fetters. In like manner, the soul which has once been chained by sin will scarcely ever think seriously of being converted and of returning to God; and should it even think of this, all its efforts will not suffice to break the chains of sin, and free it from the slavery of the devil, if God's grace does not come to its aid.

One day St. Anselm met a boy playing with a bird. The poor bird tried to fly away, but it could not, as the boy held it by a thread which he had tied to its leg. The little bird tried to fly away again and again, but the boy always pulled it back, and laughed and leaped for joy, as he saw it

flutter and fall upon the ground. St. Anselm stood gazing for a considerable time at this strange sport, and showed the greatest compassion for the poor little bird. Suddenly the thread broke; and the little bird flew away. The boy began to cry, but St. Anselm expressed the greatest joy. All present were astonished to see so great a prelate take such an interest in this childish sport. But St. Anselm said: "Do you know what I thought of, on seeing this boy amuse himself thus with the bird? Ah! it is thus, thought I, that the devil makes sport of sinners. He ties them at first, as it were, with a slender thread, and then sports with them as he pleases, drawing them from one sin into another." Some he ties by indifference to God and to their own salvation; others, by too great a love for the goods of this world; some, again, he ties by the sin of avarice, others by the sin of uncleanness, others by the sin of theft, and so on. Many an unfortunate sinner, seeing his great misery, will cry out and sigh like St. Augustine: "How long, O Lord! Wilt thou be angry forever? Remember not my past iniquities." And perceiving himself still held back by them, he cast forth miserable complaints, and reproached himself, saying: "How long? How long? To-morrow! To-morrow! Why not now? Why does not this hour put an end to my filthiness?" These complaints he uttered, and he wept with most bitter contrition of heart, not feeling courage enough to renounce his evil ways.

"Oh! would to God," cries many a sinner, "that I were free from this accursed habit of drinking, of swearing, of sinning against the angelic virtue of holy purity! What am I to do?" Like the little bird, this poor sinner wishes to get free from his sinful habits, but in vain. The devil keeps him tied by his evil habits, and drags him back into his old sins. At last the unhappy wretch, seeing that he cannot get free, gives way to despair.

Many sinners even become so hardened, that they resemble incarnate demons: even were hell open before them, they would still continue to sin. Others, again, are so unhappy, that they do not see their misery; and some even do not wish to see it, lest they should feel any stings of conscience, and conceive a desire of amendment.

Now, are such sinners altogether abandoned by the grace of God? Should they despair of their salvation? By no means. As God never withdraws from them the grace to pray to him, they obtain, by prayer, a particular actual grace enabling them to dispose themselves for receiving sanctifying grace.

There is an infidel. He is as yet groping in the darkness of heathenism. However, he believes in the Supreme Being, who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. If he prays to God to lead him to the way of salvation, his prayer will be heard. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you."

Clovis, heathen King of the Franks, the greatest conqueror of his age, married St. Clotildis in 493. The first fruit of their marriage was a son, who, by the mother's influence, was baptized and called Ingomer. This child died during the time of his wearing the white habit, within the first week after his baptism. Clovis severely reproached Clotildis and said: "If he had been consecrated in the name of my gods, he had not died; but having been baptized in the name of yours, he could not live." The queen answered: "I thank God who has thought me worthy of bearing a child whom he has called to his kingdom." She had afterward another son, for whom she procured baptism, and who was named Chlodimir. He also fell sick, and the king said, in great anger: "It could not be otherwise: he will die presently in the same manner his brother did, hav-

ing been baptized in the name of your Christ." God was pleased to put the good queen to this trial; but by her prayers the child recovered. She never ceased to exhort the king to forsake his idols and to acknowledge the true God; but he held out a long time against all her arguments, till, on the following occasion, God was pleased wonderfully to bring him to the confession of his holy name:—In an engagement with the Suevi and Alemanni, which was one of the fiercest battles recorded in history, the king and his whole army were in imminent danger of being defeated by the Alemanni. Seeing that he could be saved only by a supernatural power, he began to pray thus: "Jesus Christ, Thou of whom Clotildis has often told me that Thou art the Son of the living God and that Thou givest aid to the hardpressed, and victory to those who trust in Thee! I humbly crave Thy powerful assistance. If Thou grantest me the victory over my enemies, I will believe in Thee and be baptized in Thy name. For I have called upon my gods in vain. They must be impotent, as they cannot help those who serve them. Now I invoke Thee, desiring to believe in Thee: do, then, deliver me from the hands of my adversaries."

No sooner had Clovis uttered his prayer than the Alemanni became panic-stricken, took to flight, and soon after, seeing their king slain, sued for peace. Thereupon Clovis united both nations, the Franks and the Alemanni, returned home, and became a Christian.

There is another man: he is as yet groping in the darkness of error and heresy. Let him pray in this way: "My Lord Jesus Christ, if I cannot be saved in my religion, enlighten my mind to know what is better, and give me courage to do better," and the Lord will not fail to hear his prayer and bring him to the light of the true religion.

Witness F. Thayer, a minister of the Anglican Church, who prayed in such a manner, and obtained the gift of true faith.

There is another. He is an apostate Catholic. He has given up the practice of his religion for several years. He has joined a secret society. He has no courage to give it up and return to his religious duties. Let him persevere in praying to the Lord for courage, for true sorrow and amendment of life, and his prayers will be heard. He will again become a good Catholic.

La Harpe was an infidel, and a great friend of Voltaire; he wrote several works against religion. At last, when the French Revolution broke out, he was seized and cast into prison. There, in the silence and solitude of his cell, he found time to examine the truths of religion, which he had hitherto neglected. He was, as he himself relates, sad and lonely in his cell. To while away his time, he read a few pious books that had been given him. Gradually the light of faith began to dawn again in his heart; but this heavenly light filled him with terror. All the sins of his whole life came up before him. He knew that death was at hand; for, in those days, there was but one step from the prison to the scaffold. For the first time in forty years he turned to God in an humble, sorrowful heart, and began to *pray*. There was no priest near to prepare him for death. They were all dead, or banished, or imprisoned. What was he to do? At last, after having offered up a *fervent prayer*, he opened, at random, a copy of the "Imitation of Christ," and read these consoling words: "See, my son, I have come to thee, because thou hast called me." These words filled him with unspeakable consolation. His heart was touched; he fell upon his face; he burst into tears. This was the beginning of a new life. La Harpe

was afterward set free; but he remained ever after faithful to the good resolutions he had formed whilst shut up in his dreary prison.

Indeed, as fire quickly burns tow, so quickly does God change the heart of the sinner, and dispose him for receiving sanctifying grace, provided such a favor is asked.

The parish-priest of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris said one day, in a sermon, that prayer to the Blessed Virgin was so powerful, that even *one* Hail Mary would be enough to convert a sinner. Now, a celebrated writer, a bad Catholic, happened to be in the church at the time. He had come to scoff at the words of the priest. "What!" said he, laughing, "one Hail Mary! Well, let me try it!" So he said the Hail Mary. He had not prayed for a long time; and, after having said one Hail Mary, he thought he would say another. Finally, after the sermon, he went into the sacristy to have a talk with the priest, and, before he left that sacristy, he made his confession, and was reconciled with God.

Would to God that all those saints now in heaven, who, for a while, led a sinful life on earth, could stand before you at this moment! Would that you could ask them in person: "Beloved souls, why did you not die in your sins? Why were you forgiven?" "Ah!" they would answer, "it was because we implored the Lord for mercy and forgiveness." "But how did it happen that you did not relaps into your former sins? How were you able to persevere in leading a penitential life until death?" "Beloved brethren," they would answer, "know that this good-will, this strength and courage came not of ourselves; no, of ourselves we were too weak, like you; we were often tempted to commit the same sins again, but then we had recourse to prayer, and God assisted us, and preserved us from sin. Prayer makes

the soul unconquerable. No evil spirit has the least power over her as long as she prays. It is, then, by prayer that we were enabled to give up sin, to lead a penitential life, and to die as holy penitents."

Ah! would that some of the souls now burning in hell could come forth and tell us why they were lost. What, think you, would the bad thief say, who was crucified at the same time with our Saviour? "Ah!" he would say, "I confess that I was a very wicked sinner throughout the course of my whole life; I committed many crimes, for which I have deserved hell a thousand times; but my companion on the cross was not less guilty; his sins cried not less to heaven for vengeance; yet he ascended from his cross into heaven, whilst I, from mine, was hurled into the depth of hell; he rejoices forever, while I am tormented in everlasting fire. What brought him into heaven? It was the simple prayer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." What brought me to hell? It was the neglect of prayer; because I would not pray I remained hardened in my sins, and died as a reprobate."

Let us rest assured that all the damned would give the same answer were they allowed to tell us the cause of their damnation. O language full of terror to hardened sinners, who do not wish to give up their sinful lives and return to God! O language full of sweetness and consolation for all those who pray to be delivered from their sins, and to be received again as children of God!

Ah! would to God that I could stand on a high mountain, surrounded by all the sinners in the world! I would cry aloud, at the top of my voice: "Pray, pray, pray! you will not die in your sins; you will be forgiven; you will be saved, if you only pray! God does not require that you should go and sell everything and give it to the poor; or

be put to the rack, or be nailed to a cross, in order to save your soul; conditions so painful as these he does not require of you; he requires the easiest in the world; all that he asks is that you should pray, and sincerely entreat him to save you. He is still the same God; he is still as powerful to help you, just as merciful to forgive you, and to receive you again into his friendship, as he was when he said to the good thief: 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'" He will be to you the same powerful, the same merciful God, that he was to St. Magdalen the Penitent, to St. Augustine, to St. Margaret of Cortona, to St. Mary of Egypt, and to many other souls whom he has delivered from their sins, and even changed into saints. But you must avail yourself of his promise: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, He shall give it to you." (John xvi. 23.) Jesus Christ has made this promise, and he will never fail to keep it. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but his word shall never pass away." He alone is lost who does not pray; he alone will be saved who perseveres in prayer. On the last day, all the saints of heaven, as well as also all the damned souls of hell, will bear witness to this truth; on that great day you, too, will bear witness to it, either with the elect on the right, if you *have prayed during life*, or with the damned on the left, if you *have neglected to pray*. Choose now whichever lot you prefer, but choose in time.

CHAPTER IV.

Prayer a necessary means of salvation for the just.

There was once an Eastern king, in his day the richest of men. A Grecian sage came to visit him, and, having seen all his glory and his majesty, was pressed by this poor child of vanity to say whether he was not the happiest of men. "Wait," said the wise man, "until you see the end." So it is as regards spiritual wealth. Almighty God, in spite of his ample promises, and his faithfulness to them, has not put out of his own hands the issues of life and death: the end comes from him as well as the beginning. When he has once given us grace, he has not, on that account, made over to us our own salvation. We can merit much; but, as we could not merit the grace of conversion, neither can we merit the grace of perseverance. From first to last we are dependent on him who made us.

There is a pious person. He has received many graces. He has lived in them so long. He has overcome many temptations. He has acquired many virtues. He possesses many supernatural gifts. He seems, from the very completeness of his sanctity, which encircles him on every side, to have, as it were, become impeccable. That he has started well, seems a reason why he will increase in virtue every day of his life. He seems fit to scale heaven by an inward power. Thus we may look at him and believe that a reverse or a fall is impossible. But the Holy Ghost tells us: "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Holy Scripture furnishes us with more than one instance by which this truth is confirmed. Who was so variously gifted, so inwardly endowed, so laden with external blessings, as Solomon? Yet Solomon, who was the wisest of men, was lifted up and fell so very low! He who wrote the Song of songs became a slave of vile affections. He fell in love with idolatrous women and followed their gods. The fall of Solomon shows that an exuberance of merits in a person is only a woe in the event if he lacks one gift,—the gift of perseverance.

There is one. He has been converted from a sinful life. He is very different from what he was. He feels the comfort of the change. He feels the peace and satisfaction of a cleansed conscience; but he is so taken up with that comfort and peace, that he rests in them and feels secure. He does not guard against temptation, or pray for support under it. He does not consider that, as he has changed from sin to fervor in religion, so he may go back from fervor to sin. He does not realize enough his continual dependence on God. Some great temptation, or some extraordinary vicissitude of life, comes upon him: he is surprised, he falls, and perhaps he never rises.

How many were good youths, yet are now careless men! They were blameless before the age of fifteen, yet now they are captives to habits of sin; they no longer go to church and to the sacraments! How many are there who, by mere change of place, have lost their holy religious fervor, and who first became careless, and then shameless!

The fall of so many must be a warning to every one of us. Indeed, the holier a person is, the greater reason has he to look carefully how he walks, lest he stumble and be lost. A deep conviction of this necessity has been to the saints their only preservative. Had they not feared to fall,

they would never have persevered. Hence, like St. Paul, they are always conscious of their sin and their peril. To hear them speak about themselves, we should think them the most depraved of sinners and the most unstable of penitents. Every day St. Philip Neri used to make a protest to God, with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, saying: "Lord, beware of me to-day lest I should betray thee, and do thee all the mischief in the world."

If a man knows that he has never deserved the good graces of his king, that the friendship which he enjoys is a pure gift, and that he is to possess it only as long as he continues to ask for it, would he not, in case he wished to enjoy it always, be obliged to entreat his benefactor to continue this favor? Now, this is precisely the case with the just in regard to the friendship, the grace of God. The grace of God is a pure gift, which no one can obtain by his own unaided efforts; and, when it is obtained, no one can preserve it until death, unless God assist him in a particular manner. To possess the grace of God, is to possess God himself, the infinite good. Now, to persevere in the possession of this grace until death is so great a favor, that, according to the teachings of the fathers of the Church, no one can merit it, even were he to perform the good works of all the saints in heaven. God bestows this gift gratuitously; and he grants it, as St. Augustine teaches, to all those who daily pray for it. The saint says: "We must pray every day for the gift of perseverance, because even the just are every day in danger of losing it."

It will be well to consider here this daily danger, as it will thoroughly convince us that the just stand in need of prayer. St. Paul the Apostle says: "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii. 5.) By this he means that no one shall be

crowned with life-everlasting unless he fight manfully until death against his enemies, the devil, the world, and his own corrupt nature.

Ever since the fall of our first parents, every man, the moment he arrives at the use of reason, engages in a warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil — three powerful enemies, who are actively employed, every instant of our life, in laying snares for the destruction of our souls.

St. Peter says that "the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (I. Peter v. 8.) It was this arch-enemy who persuaded Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit: who prevailed on Cain to slay his innocent brother Abel; who tempted Saul to pierce David with a lance. It was he who stirred up the Jews to deny and crucify Jesus Christ our Lord; who induced Ananias and Saphira to lie to the Holy Ghost; who urged Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Julian, and other heathen tyrants to put the Christians to a most cruel death. He it was who inspired the authors of heresies, such as Arius, Martin Luther, and others, to reject the authority of the one, true, Catholic Church.

The head, says St. Thomas Aquinas, has influence not only over the internal, but also over the external acts of his subject, and directs these acts to a certain end, as a person in power governs those who are under his authority. It is in the same manner that the devil reigns over all the wicked by his malicious influence. He transgressed first through pride and rebellion. On this account he was banished from heaven. Hence all those who imitate him are alienated from God. "The devil," says Holy Writ, "is king over all the children of pride." (Job xli, 25.) He will come in the person of Anti-Christ, "showing himself as if he were God." (2 Thess. ii, 4.) He will come with the

power of malice for the perdition of many of the human race; "for the mystery of iniquity already worketh." (2 Thess. ii, 7.) At the end of the world, Satan is to come in the person of Anti-Christ, "in all power, signs, and lying wonders, and in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved, but have consented to iniquity." (2 Thess. ii, 9, 10, 11.)

In like manner the devil, at the present day, still tempts ail men, especially the just, and endeavors to make them lose the grace of God. He tempts numberless souls to indifference towards God and their own salvation; he deceives many by representing to them in glowing colors the false, degrading pleasures of this world; he suggests to others the desire of joining bad secret societies; he tempts many even to conceal their sins in confession, and to receive Holy Communion unworthily; others, again, he urges to cheat their neighbor; he allures some to blind their reason by excess in drinking; some he tempts to despair; in a word, the devil leaves nothing untried which may cause the just to fall into sin. He finds the weak point of every man, and knows that this weak point is for many — very many — a strong inclination to the vice of impurity. The wicked spirit knows how to excite in them this degrading passion to such a degree that they forget their good resolutions, nay, even make little account of the eternal truths, and lose all fear of hell and the divine judgment. It is the universal opinion of all theologians that there are more souls condemned to hell on account of this sin alone than on account of any other which men commit.

But the just must not only wage war against their arch-enemy, the devil; they must also fight manfully against the seductive examples of the world. Were all those

who have lost their baptismal innocence to tell us how they came to lose it, they would all answer: "It was by that corrupt companion, by that false friend, by that wicked relative. Had I never seen that person, I would still be innocent." One unsound apple is sufficient to infect all the others near it. In like manner one corrupt person can ruin all those with whom he associates. Indeed, the bad example of one wicked man can do more harm to a community than all the devils in hell united. Small indeed is the number of those who manfully resist bad example.

The just must fight not only against the devil and the world, but also against their own corrupt nature. Had they not this enemy to contend with, the devil and the world would not so easily overcome them. Corrupt nature plays the traitor, and very often gains the victory, even when the other enemies have failed. The dangerous foe is always near, within their very hearts; and his influence is the more fatal because the greater number of the just themselves do not seem to be fully aware of his existence; hence it is that they are so little on their guard against his wiles, and fall a prey to his evil suggestions.

Ever since the fall of our first parents we are all naturally inclined to evil. Before Adam had committed sin, he was naturally inclined to good; he knew nothing of indifference in the service of God, nothing of anger, hatred, cursing, impurity, vain ambition, and the like; but no sooner had he committed sin than God permitted his inclination to good to be changed into an inclination to evil. Man, of his own free-will, forfeited the kingdom of heaven; he exchanged heaven for hell, God for the devil, good for evil, the state of grace for the state of sin. It was then, but just and right that he should not only acknowledge his guilt, repent sincerely of his great crime, but that he should also,

as long as he lived, fight against his evil inclinations, and, by this lifelong warfare, declare himself sincerely for God.

When we consider seriously the continual war we have to wage against these three powerful enemies; when we consider our extreme weakness and the sad fact, that the greater part of mankind do not overcome even one of their enemies, we see clearly how terribly true are the words of our Lord, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it." (Matt. vii, 14.) Ah! who shall find this straight way? Who will be able to conquer these three enemies of our salvation? Whence shall we obtain strength and courage to struggle bravely against them until death? Truly must we exclaim with king Josaphat: "As for us, we have not strength enough to be able to resist this multitude, which cometh violently upon us. But as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee, our God." By our own efforts alone we shall never be able to overcome even one of our enemies.

God, as we have said, has surrounded us with striking proofs of our weakness; He has permitted the most illustrious men to fall, that we might live in fear. The first man and woman, Adam and Eve; the most pious of kings, David; the most renowned of sages, Solomon; the prince of apostles and the vicar of Christ, St. Peter, all fell.

Among the great falls recorded in ecclesiastical history stand the names of Tertullian and Origen, names once so honorable. St. Macarius tells us (Hom. 27.) that a certain monk, after having been favored with a wonderful rapture and many great graces, fell, by pride, into several grievous sins. A certain rich nobleman gave his estate to the poor,

and set his slaves at liberty; yet afterwards fell into pride and many enormous sins. Another, who, in the persecution, had suffered torments with great constancy for the faith, afterward, intoxicated with self-conceit, gave great scandal by his disorders. This saint mentions one who had formerly lived a long time with him in the desert, prayed often with him, and was favored with an extraordinary gift of compunction and a miraculous power of curing many sick persons, was at last delighted with the applause of men, and drawn into the sin of pride, and died an apostate.

Now, when we see Adam in paradise, in a state of innocence, sustained by great grace, endowed with an excellent mind, with perfect knowledge of natural and divine things, at the mere word of a woman, whom he fears to displease, offend his God and Creator, from whose hands he had just issued, and drag down the whole human race in his fall, what ought we, the children of such a father, corrupted as we are by the world, the flesh and the devil, to fear?

When we see David, the man according to God's own heart, fall at a single thoughtless glance at a woman into the commission of two enormous sins, in which he remained for a whole year without realizing their heinousness; when we think of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, after having promised so solemnly rather to die than abandon his Lord, abandoning and denying him thrice, with oaths and imprecations, at the simple word of a mean servant; when we see how Tertullian, Origen, Osius, the great bishop of Córdoba, and other pillars of the Church were vanquished and overcome, though they seemed immovably fixed in faith and all virtues — with such striking examples before us, of deplorable weakness among the greatest and best, what are we to think of our own weakness in face of the

very same enemies who overcame them, unless we are sustained by that all-powerful aid which can come from God alone?

Now the Lord of mercy gives this strength to all who ask for it. To those who pray the Lord has promised to give not only one, two, or a hundred, or a thousand graces, but all the lights and graces, without a single exception, which are necessary to bring us and to lead us up to eternal glory. "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." The Son of God was not content with saying, "All things" or "whatsoever"; but, to exclude the possibility of a single grace being excepted, he said: "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray . . . shall come unto you."

Prayer is that powerful means which God has given to every one to preserve his grace and friendship.

Even though it should seem that all is lost, that we cannot overcome the temptations of the devil, that we cannot avoid the bad example of the world, that we cannot resist the revolts of corrupt nature, let us remember that, as St. Paul assures us, God is faithful, and will never suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength, but will make issue, also, with the temptation, that we may be able to bear it. But we must also remember that God will give us strength in the hour of temptation, *only on condition that we pray for it; that we pray for it earnestly, perseveringly.* "God," says St. Augustine, "does not command what is impossible; if he commands you to do something, he admonishes you at the same time to do what you can, and to ask him for his assistance whenever anything is above your strength, and he promises to assist you to do that which otherwise would naturally be impossible for you to do."

God does not give to the saints even grace to fulfil difficult precepts or duties, unless they pray for it. God, without our asking it, gives us all grace to do what is easy, but not what is difficult. The saints are only promised grace to pray for strength to do what is difficult, and to overcome violent temptations.

Father Segneri relates that a young man named Paccus retired into a wilderness in order to do penance for his sins. After some years of penance he was so violently assaulted by temptations that he thought it impossible to resist them any longer. As he was often overcome by them, he began to despair of his salvation; he even thought of taking away his life. He said to himself that if he must go to hell, it were better to go instantly than to live on thus in sin, and thereby only increase his torments. One day he took a poisonous viper in his hand, and in every possible manner urged it to bite him; but the reptile did not hurt him in the least. "O God!" cried Paccus, "there are so many who do not wish to die, and I, who wish so much for death, cannot die." At this moment he heard a voice saying to him: "Poor wretch! do you suppose you can overcome temptations by your own strength? Pray to God for assistance, and he will help you to overcome them." Encouraged by these words, he began to pray most fervently, and soon lost all his fear. He ever after led a very edifying life. "For him, then," says St. Isidore, "who is assailed with temptation, there is no other remedy left than prayer, to which he must have recourse as often as he is tempted. Frequent recourse to prayer subdues all temptation to sin." (Lib. III. de Summo Bono, chap. viii.)

After St. Theodore had been cruelly tortured in many different ways, he was at last commanded by the tyrant to stand on red-hot tiles. Finding this kind of torture almost

too great to endure, he prayed to the Lord to alleviate his sufferings, and the Lord granted him courage and fortitude to endure these torments until death. (Triumphs of the Martyrs. By St. Alphonsus.) St. Perpetua was a lady of noble family, brought up in the greatest luxury, and married to a man of high rank. She had everything to make her cling to this world; for she had not only her husband, but also a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom she was very fond, and a little babe whom she was nursing. She was only twenty-two years of age, and was of an affectionate and timid disposition, so that she did not seem naturally well fitted to endure martyrdom with courage, or to bear the separation from her babe and her aged parents, whom she loved so much. Although Perpetua loved Jesus, yet she could not help trembling at the thought of the tortures which she would have to suffer. When she was first thrown into prison, she was very much frightened at the darkness of the dungeon; she was half-suffocated with the heat and bad air, and she was shocked at the rudeness of the soldiers, who pushed her and the other prisoners about; for she had always lived in a splendid palace, surrounded with every luxury, and had been accustomed from her childhood to be treated with respect. If, then, she shrank from these little trials, what should she do when she was put to the torture, or when she had to face the wild beasts in the amphitheatre? She was conscious of her own weakness, and at first trembled; but she knew that the heroic virtue of the martyrs did not depend on natural courage and strength; she knew that if she prayed to Jesus, he would give her strength to bear everything, so that the grace of God would shine out most brightly in the midst of her natural weakness. A few days after she was put in prison she was baptized; and as she came out of the

water, the Holy Ghost inspired her *to ask for patience* in all the bodily sufferings which she might be called on to endure; so she began to pray very fervently, and from that time she became so calm and so joyful that in spite of all her sufferings she was able to cheer and comfort her fellow sufferers.

It was by prayer that the saints were enabled to overcome all their temptations, and to suffer patiently all their crosses and persecutions until death; the more they suffered, the more they prayed, and the Lord came to their assistance. "He shall cry to me," says the Lord, "and I will hear him. I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and will glorify him." (Ps. xc, 15.)

This truth we learn especially from the angel who descended with the three children into the fiery furnace. "The angel of the Lord went down with Azarias and his companions into the furnace." (Dan. iii. 49.) The angel of the Lord had descended into the flames before them, otherwise they would have been immediately consumed; but they did not see him until they prayed to God. After having prayed, they saw how the angel of the Lord drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace, and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew. "Thus the angel of the Lord," says Cornelius à Lapide, "gives to understand that in persecutions and tribulations prayer is the only means of salvation. Those who pray are always victorious; those who neglect to pray give way to temptations, and are lost."

"I have known many," says St. Cyprian, "and have shed tears over them, who seemed to possess great courage and fortitude of soul, and yet, when on the point of receiving the crown of life-everlasting, they fell away and became apostates. Now, what was the cause of this? They turned

away their eyes from him who alone is able to give strength to the weak. They had given up prayer, and commenced to look for aid and protection from man. They considered their own natural weakness; they looked at the red-hot gridirons, and at all the other frightful instruments of torture; they compared the acuteness of the pain with their own strength; but as soon as one thinks within himself, I can suffer this, but not that, his martyrdom will never be crowned with a glorious end. It was thus that they lost the victory. He alone who abandons himself entirely to the divine will, and who looks for help from God alone, will remain firm and immovable, and persevere to the end. But this can be expected only from him who is gifted with a lively faith, and who does not tremble, or consider how great is the tyrant's cruelty, or how weak is human nature, but who considers only the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, who fights and conquers in his members. No one should lose courage when he has to endure some great bodily or spiritual affliction. Let him trust in the Lord, whose battles he fights. He will not permit any one 'to be tempted beyond his strength, but will grant a happy issue to all his sufferings.'"

"Christians, then," says Cornelius à Lapide, "cannot make a better use of their leisure time than to spend it in prayer." The saints knew well that prayer was the powerful means to escape the snares of the devil, and therefore they loved and practised nothing so much as this holy exercise.

King David often prayed to the Lord: "Lord, look upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor." (Ps. xxiv. 16.) "I cried with all my whole heart: Hear me, O Lord; let thy hand be with me to save me." (Ps. cxviii.) He assures us that he prayed without ceasing.

“My eyes,” said he, “are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.” (Ps. cxviii.) “Daniel,” says St. John Chrysostom, “preferred to die rather than to give up prayer.” St. Philip Neri, being one day commanded to pray a little less than usual, said to one of his fathers: “I begin to feel like a brute.” Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice used to say a Christian should not let a moment pass by without saying: “My Jesus, have mercy on me!” “As a city fortified by strong walls,” says St. John Chrysostom, “cannot be easily taken, so also a soul fortified by prayer cannot be overcome by the devil. The devil is afraid of approaching a soul that prays; he fears the courage and strength that she obtains in prayer; prayer gives more strength to the soul than food does to the body. The more the soul practises prayer, the more will she be nourished and strengthened; and the less she practises prayer, the more keenly will she feel her own natural weakness. As plants cannot remain fresh and green without moisture, air, and light, so the soul cannot preserve the grace of God without prayer.”

A plant usually prospers only in its native clime. The same is true of the soul. The true home of the soul is God; transplant it, and it will not live. Now, prayer is the means by which the soul is preserved in this its true home. Prayer keeps the soul united to God, and God to the soul, and thus it lives a perfect life. This is most emphatically expressed by St. John Chrysostom. “Every one,” he says, “who does not pray, and who does not wish to keep in continual communion with God, is dead; he has lost his life, nay, he has even lost his reason. He must be insane, for he does not understand what a great honor it is to pray; and he is not convinced of the important truth that not to pray is to bring death upon his soul, as it is impos-

sible for him to lead a virtuous life without the aid of prayer. For how can he be able to practise virtue without throwing himself unceasingly at the feet of him from whom alone comes all strength and courage?" (Lib. de Orando Deum.)

"Which of the just," asks this great saint, "did ever fight valiantly without prayer? Which of them ever conquered without prayer?" (Sermo de Mose.) Neither any of the apostles, nor any of the martyrs, nor any of the confessors, nor any of the holy virgins and widows, nor any of the just in heaven or on earth. Hence all theologians teach that prayer is as necessary for the salvation of adults as baptism is for that of infants. As no infant can enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism, so no adult shall obtain eternal life without asking of God the graces necessary for salvation. Because of this strict and indispensable necessity of asking God's graces, St. Alphonsus tells us that he made it a rule of his order that in every mission conducted by the Redemptorist Fathers there should be a sermon on prayer. He says that every preacher should, in almost all his sermons, exhort his hearers to the practice of prayer, and should admonish them never to cease to call for aid in all their temptations, at least by invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation continues. He cautions every confessor not to be content with endeavoring to excite his penitents to sorrow for their sins, and to a firm purpose of amendment; but to be careful also to impress upon them the necessity of praying for grace to be faithful to their resolutions, and of asking the divine aid as often as they are tempted to offend God. He concludes his book on prayer in the following words: "I say, and I repeat, and I shall repeat while I live, that our salvation depends alto-

gether on prayer, and that on that account all writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, and all confessors in the tribunal of penance should continually exclaim and repeat: "Pray, pray, and never cease to pray; for if you continue to pray your salvation is secure; if you give up prayer, your perdition is inevitable.'"

St. Augustine assures us that he "who does not know how to pray well will not know how to live well." (Homil. 45.) "Nay," says St. Francis of Assisi, "never expect anything good from a soul that is not given up to prayer." St. Bernard was wont to say: "If I see a man who is not very fond of prayer, I say to myself, That man cannot be virtuous." St. Charles Borromeo says, in one of his pastoral letters: "Of all means that Jesus Christ has left for our salvation, prayer is the most important." (Act. Eccl. Med. p. 1005.) "Indeed," says St. Alphonsus, "in the ordinary course of Providence, our meditations, resolutions, and promises will all be fruitless without prayer, because we will be unfaithful to the divine inspiration if we do not pray; in order to be able to overcome temptations, to practise virtue, to keep the commandments of God, we need, besides divine light, meditations, and good resolutions, the *actual assistance* of God. Now, this divine assistance is given to those only who pray for it, and who pray for it unceasingly."

The governor Paschasius commanded the holy virgin Lucy to be exposed to prostitution in a brothel-house; but God rendered her immovable, so that the guards were not able to carry her thither. He also made her an over-match for the cruelty of the persecutors in overcoming fire and other torments. It is only the Lord who can make us immovable in all our good resolutions; it is only his grace that can prevent us from being carried by temptation into

the abyss of hell. "Unless the Lord had been my helper," says David, "my soul had almost dwelt in hell." (Ps. xciii.) And, "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it. (Ps. cxxvii. 1.) Unless the Lord preserve the soul from sin, all her endeavors to avoid it will be fruitless. "Lord," exclaimed St. Philip Neri, "keep Thy hand over me this day; otherwise Thou wilt be betrayed by Philip."

Father Hunolt, S. J., says that to hope to remain free from sin, and persevere in virtue, and be saved without prayer, is to tempt God, to require of him a miracle; it is just as absurd as to imagine that you can see without eyes, hear without ears, and walk without feet. Of this we should be firmly convinced. Let us, then, as St. Bernard admonishes us, always have recourse to prayer as to the surest weapon of defence. Let prayer be our first act in the morning. Let us have recourse to prayer whenever we feel tempted to lukewarmness, to impatience, to impurity, or to any other sin. Let us arm ourselves with prayer when we have to mingle with the wicked world, or when we have to fight against our corrupt nature. Let prayer never leave our hearts; let it never desert our lips; let it be our constant companion on all our journeys; let it close our eyes at night; let it be our exercise of predilection. Every other loss may be repaired, but the loss of prayer never. If, on the account of delicate constitution, we cannot fast, we may give alms; if we have no opportunity to confess our sins, we may obtain the forgiveness of them by an act of perfect contrition; nay, even baptism itself may sometimes be supplied by an earnest desire for this sacrament, accompanied by an ardent love for God. But as for him who neglects to practise prayer, there is no other means of salvation left. Let us give up every other occupation rather

than neglect prayer. Let us persevere in prayer as all the saints have done; let us follow the example of our divine Saviour, who prayed even to the very last moment of his life; let us leave this world with prayer upon our lips. Thus prayer will conduct us to heaven, there to reign eternally with our Lord Jesus Christ and all the just in everlasting joy and glory.

CHAPTER V.

Conditions and Qualities of Prayer.

Does God hear our prayer?

Yes; for Christ says: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. (John xvi., 23.)"

If God did not wish to hear the prayer of every one, he would not have promised to hear it. But he always keeps this promise, provided our prayer has the necessary conditions and qualities. Hence it is asked in the catechism:

How must we pray?

And the answer is: *We must pray: 1, with devotion; 2, with humility; 3, with confidence; 4, with resignation to the will of God; and, 5, with perseverance.*

1. We must pray with devotion, that is, with fervor.

"Well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matt. xv. 8.) In these words our Saviour gives us to understand that a prayer which proceeds not from the heart, or which is not devout and fervent, is not heard by his heavenly Father. There are many Christians who recite their prayers without thinking of what they say. Should they be required to tell what they asked of our Lord, they would be at a loss for an answer. The prayers of such Christians are quite powerless with God. One "Our Father," said with fervor, is better, and obtains more from God, than the entire Rosary recited a dozen times in a careless manner.

St. Bernard once saw how an angel of the Lord wrote down in a book the divine praises of each of his brethren when they were reciting the Divine Office; some were written in letters of gold to express the devotion and fervor with which they were recited; others in letters of silver, on account of the pure intention with which they were performed; others were written with ink, to signify that they were said by way of routine and in a slothful manner; others, again, were written with water-color, to indicate that they had been performed with great lukewarmness, and without devotion or fervor.

The divine praises of some of St. Bernard's brethren were not written down at all; but instead of the chanted psalms, the following words were written: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;" (Isai. xxix, 13.) to signify that the Angel of the Lord was much displeased with this kind of prayer.

Holy angels! show us once your book, that we may see in what colors the prayers of so many Christians are written down, especially in time of prosperity, when no calamity forces them to have recourse to God. There is good reason to fear that the prayers of many are written down in letters of ink, others in water color, and the greater number of them, I fear, are not written down at all; so that the devil himself must rejoice and laugh at them, as he did at the prayers of two Christians, of whom Jourdanus speaks: "They recited their prayer in so careless a manner, that, at the conclusion of it, the devil appeared, and cast an intolerable odor around, at the same time exclaiming, with great laughter: "Such incense is due to such prayer!"

Moreover, how many are there not who say their prayers without being at all in earnest to obtain what they

ask? They recite, for instance, the "Our Father" a hundred, yea, a thousand times, without wishing at all that any of its seven petitions should be granted. Let us examine them briefly. The first petition is: "Hallowed be Thy name"; that is, "Give me, and to all men, the grace to know thee always better and better; to honor, praise, glorify, and love thee; to comprehend the greatness of thy blessings, the duration of thy promises, the sublimity of thy majesty, and the depth of thy judgments." These are the graces which we ask in the first petition of the "Our Father." But who are those that earnestly ask for these graces, either for themselves or for others? Certainly these blessings are not asked for by any of those who, when entering the church, do not even think of bending the knee to express their faith in the name of God.

Nor are these graces asked for by those who do not desire to listen to the divine word in sermons and Christian instructions, that they may better learn their duty towards God, themselves, and their fellow-men.

Nor are these graces asked for by those who never think of praying fervently for the conversion of sinners, heretics, Jews, or heathens; or by those who dishonor the name of God by cursing and swearing, thus teaching others the language of the devil; nor by those who are ashamed of giving good example, who think, speak, and act badly, when others do the same; nor by all those who grievously transgress any of the commandments of God, and thus dishonor, despise, and insult the name of God. All such men certainly do not praise and honor God's name, and yet with their lips they will always pray, "Hallowed be thy name," without contributing anything at all towards the glory of the Lord of heaven and earth. Of these we must think

that they know not what they ask, or do not wish to obtain what they ask.

The second petition is, "Thy kingdom come." Where are those who truly wish that God alone should reign in their hearts, and that no creature should have any part in it? Alas! most men feel provoked at the least temporal loss, at the slightest harsh word. And what account do the generality of men make of the grace and friendship of God? The readiness with which they commit sin tells it sufficiently. How difficult is it not for the priest to prevail upon them so far as to make them go to Confession and holy Communion? How seldom do they pray? Shall we then believe that those who neglect and refuse the means to acquire the grace of God are in earnest, when they pray "Thy kingdom come"?

And where are those who truly desire to leave this world for a better one? Alas! should death knock at their door, what mourning, what alarm, what tears would it produce. Nay, many even are so much attached to this life, that, should God offer them the choice between heaven and earth, they would prefer the latter. Let them pray, sigh, and exclaim, "Thy kingdom come," their prayer is not true, because they do not wish for God's kingdom.

And where are those who are in earnest when they pray: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"? Were God to say to them: "Well, it is my will that you should undergo humiliations and contempt on the part of your neighbor, of your friend, of your companion. Like Job, you shall lose your good name, your honor among your fellow men, or your children, and all your earthly goods; how soon would every one of them change his prayer, and say: "Lord, be it otherwise done to me, as I

do not mean this when I pray: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

The fourth petition is, "Give us this day our daily bread"—that is, give us everything necessary for the support of our temporal and spiritual life. Of course, no one refuses the temporal, but where are those who truly hunger and thirst after the food of their souls, after prayer, the Word of God, Confession, and holy Communion? As this food is relished but by the smallest number of men, it is evident that the greater part of them do not wish to be heard when they make this petition.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that have trespassed against us." Neither does this fifth petition of the "Our Father" proceed from the heart of most men. They all, of course, wish that God should forgive them every sin, guilt, and punishment, but they themselves do not like to forgive. How long do they not harbor in their hearts a certain aversion, rancor, even enmity, against those of their fellow men who offended them by a little harsh word! To salute them, to speak to or pray for them, seems too hard. How can they be sincere in saying, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that have trespassed against us"? As they ask forgiveness of God in the same way as they forgive others, they cannot be in earnest when they pray for forgiveness; their prayer is untrue; otherwise, they would forgive their fellow men.

"Lead us not into temptation"—that is, Lord, preserve us from the temptations of the devil, of the flesh, and of the world. But, alas! most men love the occasion of temptations, and betake themselves wilfully unto it. How should the Lord, then, preserve them from temptations? Most assuredly they do not wish at all to be heard in making this petition.

“And deliver us from evil”—that is, preserve us from sin; but the greater number of men commit sins deliberately every day, not doing the least violence to themselves by trying to avoid the occasions of sin, or to have recourse to prayer in the moment of temptation, or to receive the sacraments frequently. As they do not make use of the means which God has given us to be preserved from sin, how can they pray in truth or in earnest: “Deliver us from evil”? They do not mean it.

Such a prayer is worthless in the eyes of the Lord; he will never hear us, unless we are in earnest to obtain what we pray for. “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John v, 6.) said our Lord to the man languishing thirty-eight years. “What will ye that I do to you?” (Matth. xxix, 32.) our Lord asked the two blind men. Had he noticed that they were not in earnest in their petition for health, he would have left them alone. Holy Scripture says of those who pray to God in earnest and with fervor, that they *cry* to the Lord. Thus holy David says of himself: “In my trouble I *cried* to the Lord, and he heard me.” (Ps. cxix, 1.) And the Lord has promised to hear such a prayer. “He shall *cry* to me, and I will hear him.” (Ps. lxi, 15.) Now, to cry to the Lord means, according to St. Bernard, to pray with a great desire to be heard. The greater this desire is, the more piercing is this cry of prayer to the ears of God.

In vain do we hope that God will hear our prayer, if it be destitute of this earnest desire, fervor, sighing, crying, and effusion of the heart. Hence the prophet Jeremias says: “Arise, give I raise in the night, in the beginning of the watches; pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord; lift up thy hands to him for the life of thy little children that have fainted for hunger.” (Jeremias ii,

19.) Now what is it to pour out our heart before the Lord? It is to pray, to sigh, to cry with a most vehement desire to be heard by our Lord. Hence St. Bernard says: "A vehement desire is great crying in the ears of the Lord," for God considers more the ardent desire and love of the heart than the cries of the lips. And St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans: "The spirit himself asketh for us with *unspeakable groanings*." (Chap. viii, 26.) Hence the royal prophet says of his prayer: "In his sight I pour out my prayer." (Ps. cxl, 3.) And in Ps. lxi, 9., he says: "*Pour out your heart before him.*" It was thus that Anna poured out her heart before the Lord, and obtained the holy child Samuel. (I Kings i, 15.) "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears; and it came to pass, as she multiplied prayers before the Lord," etc.

Here the holy Fathers ask what is meant by this long prayer of Anna, since she besought the Lord only in a few words to grant her a child. St. John Chrysostom answers, and says: "Although her prayer consisted of but few words, yet, it was long, on account of the interior fervor and ardent desire with which she poured out her heart before the Lord, for she prayed more with her heart than with her lips, according to what is related in holy Scripture: 'Now Anna spoke from her heart, whilst her lips only moved, but her voice was silent.'" (I Kings i, 13.) Our Lord will, therefore, hear us, provided we understand how to pour out our hearts in prayer—that is, to lay open before him all the wishes and desires of our soul, its griefs, sufferings, cares, solitudes, and anxieties, laying them, as it were, into his paternal heart, and into the bosom of his divine Providence, in order that he may come to aid, relieve, and comfort us.

Nay, according to St. Paul, we ought to do still more. In his epistle to the Ephesians (Chap. vi, 18.) we read: "By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit." In these words the Apostle gives us to understand that we should pray so earnestly and fervently to God, as to sigh, cry, strike our breast, falling prostrate on the ground; nay, even conjure the Lord, by the death and blood of Jesus Christ, and by everything sacred, thus to move him to grant our prayer. Should we experience, in our will, a certain languor, sloth and tepidity, nay, even a certain repugnance and resistance to ask favors of God with fervor and earnestness, we must beseech our dear Lord, as the holy Church does in one of her prayers, to compel our rebellious wills, by means best calculated to enkindle this holy fervor in our hearts, in order that we may make sure of being heard, and of receiving what we pray for.

In order to produce this holy fervor in our hearts, God often sends us troubles, crosses, sickness, and adversities of every description, nothing being better calculated to make us pray with fervor than afflictions, tribulations and crosses. Let the soul be under heavy sufferings, which it would like to cast off, surely it will not need a prayer-book. It is then that, like hungry beggars, it finds a flow of words to produce the most heartfelt and fervent prayer. In prosperous times the prayer-book is recurred to, but in the hour of adversity it is the heart that speaks, from an over-great desire to be relieved and comforted. It is then that men say, with David: "All the day I cried to thee, O Lord! I stretched out my hands to thee." (Ps. lxxxvii, 10.) "Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God!" (Ps. xii, 4.) Such prayers are most pleasing to God, and he cannot help hearing them, according to what David says: "In my trouble I cried to the Lord, and he heard me." (Ps. cxix, I.)

When the Prophet Jonas was swallowed by the whale, and carried about in the depths of the ocean, he prayed most fervently to the Lord his God, saying: "Thou hast cast me forth into the heart of the deep sea, and a flood hath encompassed me; all thy billows and waves have passed over me." (Jonas ii, 4.) He then said: "I cried out in my affliction to the Lord, and *he heard me*. I cried out of the belly of hell, and *thou hast heard my voice*." (Verse 3.) How great was the affliction of Sara, on being accused of having murdered seven husbands, who had been killed by a devil named Asmodeus, at their first going in unto her. At this reproach, says Holy Scripture, she went into an upper chamber of her house, and for three days and three nights did neither eat nor drink, but, continuing in prayer with tears, besought God to deliver her from this reproach. "And her prayers were heard, in the sight of the glory of the Most High God." (Job, iii. 10, 11.) With what fervor did not the Apostles cry out to our Lord Jesus Christ, amidst the storms of the sea: "Lord save us, we perish"? And he heard their cry, and commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. (Matt. viii. 25, 36.) Yes, in tribulation is truly verified what is related of the Ruler in the Gospel: "And he himself believed, and his whole house." (John iv. 53.) It is, then, that not only one member of the family will pray; nay, father, mother, children, servants, relatives, will unite in beseeching the Lord for assistance, because grief and affliction have come upon the whole house. Thus the Latin proverb is verified: "Qui nescit orare, eat ad mare." Let him who does not know how to pray with fervor, make a voyage at sea. There the storms and dangers of death will teach him to pour forth most fervent prayers. Such prayers are most powerful with, and they are heard by, the Lord.

I cannot omit remarking that tears shed during prayer are most powerful with God to obtain our petitions. The Fathers of the Church are profuse in bestowing praises upon humble tears of the soul. The Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints abound in examples, to prove their power with God. "Oh, how great is the power which the tears of sinners exercise with God!" exclaims St. Peter Chrysologus. (Serm. 93.) "They water heaven, wash the earth clean, deliver from hell, and prevail upon God to recall the sentence of damnation pronounced over every mortal sin." "Yes," says Anselmus Lauduensis, commenting on the words of the Book of Tobias, (Chap. iii. 11.) "continuing in prayer, with tears he besought God." Prayer appeases God, but, if tears are added, he feels overcome, and unable to resist any longer. The former is for him an odoriferous balm, the latter is a sweet tyranny."

Hence Julianus (Lib. de Ligno vitæ, chap. ix.) exclaims, with truth: "O humble tears, how great is your power, how great is your reign! You need not fear the Tribunal of the Eternal Judge; you silence all your accusers, and no one dares prevent you from approaching the Lord; should you enter alone, you will not come out empty. Moreover, you conquer the unconquerable, you bind the Omnipotent, you open heaven, you chase all the devils." "Indeed," says Peter Cellensis, (Lib. de Panibus, chap. xii.) "the infernal spirits find the flames of hell more supportable than our tears." Cornelius à Lapide says: "One tear of the sinner, produced by the sorrow of his heart, is capable of making God forgive and forget many, even the most atrocious crimes." For this reason St. Leo, the Pope, says of the tears of St. Peter, (Serm. 9, de Passione.) "O happy tears of thine, O holy Apostle St. Peter, which were for thee a holy baptism to cancel thy sin of denying the Lord."

St. Magdalen asks of our Lord the forgiveness of her numerous and great sins; but in what manner? "She began to wash his sacred feet with her tears; (Luke vii. 38.) these tears moved his compassionate heart, and made him say, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."

Why was it that the holy patriarch Jacob, when wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, received his blessing? (Gen. xxxii.) It was because he asked it with tears in his eyes: "He *wept*, and made supplication to him." (Osee, xii. 4.) In the fourth Book of Kings, (Chap. xx.) we read as follows: "In these days Ezechias was sick unto death, and Isaias the Prophet came to him and said: Thus saith the Lord God: give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live. And he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying: I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is pleasing before thee. And Ezechias *wept with much weeping.*" What did he obtain by his tears? Holy Writ says: "And before Isaias was gone out of the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to him, saying: Go back and tell Ezechias: thus saith the Lord: I have heard thy prayer and I have seen thy *tears*; and behold I have healed thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the Temple of the Lord. And I will add to thy days fifteen years."

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself often prayed with tears in his eyes, according to what St. Paul the Apostle writes: "Who, in the days of his flesh, *with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplication, was heard* for his reverence." (Heb. v. 7.) In his comment on Zacharias, (Chap. xii.) Cornelius à Lapidè relates, that St. Dunstan, after the death of King Edwin, from whom he had received

much ill-treatment, saw, whilst at prayer, several black men running off with the soul of the king in their hands. Forgetting all the injuries and ill-treatment which he had received from Edwin, he took pity on him in his miserable condition, shedding *torrents of tears* before the face of the Lord, for the deliverance of the king's soul, and he did not cease weeping and praying until the Lord heard him. Soon after he saw the same black men again, but their hands were empty, and the soul of the king was no longer in their possession. They then commenced to curse and swear, and utter the most abominable imprecations against the servant of God, to which St. Dunstan paid no attention, but thanked God for the extraordinary great mercy shown to the king.

Let us, then, with Judith, (Chap. viii. 15.) pray to the Lord, and ask with tears his pardon, his graces and all his favors; and let us rest assured, that as a mother cannot help consoling her weeping child, neither will our dear Lord refuse to hear the petitions of weeping souls.

2. We must pray with humility.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus to himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast thrice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying: O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! I say to you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” (Luke xviii, 10, 14.)

In this parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that prayer without humility obtains nothing. As the Pharisee left the temple just as bad and as sinful as he entered, so shall we not improve by

prayer, if we pray with the same sentiments of pride and self-conceit. Even common sense tells us that prayer, to be good, must be humble. Should a poor man beg alms in a haughty and impudent manner, he would be despised by every person; for to beg and be proud at the same time is an abominable thing. All beggars know this but too well; hence many of them study different ways and manners to show themselves humble; they take the last place; they adopt humble language; they fall prostrate before you, if you meet them, asking alms with joined hands and with tears in their eyes. Should they have a good suit of clothes, they will put on ragged and tattered ones when they go out begging. How many humble reasons do they not allege to obtain an alms, such as not having eaten anything for the whole day. They pretend to suffer innumerable infirmities, and so lamentably do they sigh, as even to move the hardest hearts to pity. No one blames them for this conduct; every one, on the contrary, approves of their manner of acting.

If humility, then, is required from men when asking a favor of their fellow-men, how much more will it not be required from us by the Lord of heaven and earth, when we address him in prayer? To know that we are sinners, and that we have so often offended the divine Majesty; that we have crucified our Lord Jesus Christ by our heinous sins; to know that if God did not assist us every day we would commit most shameful crimes, and become even worse than the brute — all this should, undoubtedly, be a sufficient reason for us always to remain humble, and to pray with sentiments of exterior and interior humility, saying, with the Publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" in order that we, like him, may always come forth from prayer more acceptable, more justified, and

more sanctified in the sight of the Lord of heaven and earth. "From the beginning have the proud not been acceptable to thee," said Judith, "but the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased thee." (Judith, ix. 16.)

How great was not the wisdom which Solomon received in prayer! But in what manner, and with what sentiments, did he pray? Holy Writ says that Solomon, when praying, "had fixed both knees on the ground, and had spread his hands towards heaven." (III. Kings, vii, 54.) St. Stephen effected by his prayer the conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, and of many others of his enemies. But how humble was not his prayer? "Falling on his knees," says Holy Scripture, "he cried with a loud voice saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts, vii, 59.) How humble must not have been the prayer of St. James the Apostle, who used to pray so long on his knees that the skin of them became as hard as that of a camel. St. John Chrysostom adds, that also the skin of the forehead of this Apostle had become quite hard, from lying with it prostrate on the ground whilst at prayer. Ribadeneira, and others, relate the same of St. Bartholomew the Apostle.

The good thief received the forgiveness of his sins, but, before asking it, he humbled himself, avowing before the whole world what he was, and what he had deserved. "We receive the due reward of our deeds. (Luke xxiii, 41.) The woman of Canaan suffers herself to be compared to a dog by our Lord Jesus Christ; she does not feel herself insulted by this comparison, believing, as she did, that she deserved this name. Our dear Saviour wondered at this, saying: "O, woman, great is thy faith." (Matt. xv, 28.) Her faith was so great, because her humility was profound. Hence she heard, from the mouth of our Lord, these consoling

words: "Be it done to thee as thou wilt." The prodigal son says; "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." (Luke xv, 18.) The father, seeing this great humility and sorrow in his son, pardoned him, and even received him as one of his best children.

God will treat us in the same manner, if we present ourselves before him with the same sentiments of humility and unworthiness. When our Lord Jesus Christ said to the Centurion: "I will come and heal thy servant," the Centurion answered: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." (Matt. viii, 8.) This humility and faith of the Centurion pleased our Saviour so much, that he said to him: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee; and the servant was healed at the same hour." (Matt. viii, 13.)

And in what manner did our Lord Jesus Christ himself pray? "Kneeling down, he prayed." (Luke xxii, 47.) Nay, he did more: "He fell upon his face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." (Matt. xxvi, 39.) St. Thais, after her conversion from her sinful life, did not even dare so much as pronounce the name of God when praying. She used to say: "Thou who madest me, have pity on me." St. Paul the Hermit was so much accustomed to pray on his knees, and with his hands lifted up to heaven, that he died in this posture. Is it, then, astonishing that the saints have received so many and such great favors from God, since their humility was so great, and so pleasing to him? "To the humble God giveth grace," says the Apostle St. James. "Their prayer shall pierce the clouds." (Eccles. xxxv, 21.)

"Yes," says St. Alphonsus, "should a soul have com-

mitted ever so many sins, yet the Lord will not reject it, if she knows how to humble herself." "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Ps. i, 19.) As he is severe and inexorable to the proud, so he is bountiful, merciful, and liberal to the humble. "Know, my daughter," said Jesus Christ, one day, to St. Catherine of Sienna, "that whosoever shall humbly persevere in asking graces of me, shall obtain all virtues." "Never did I," said St. Teresa, "receive more favors from the Lord, than when I humbled myself before his divine Majesty."

3. We must pray with confidence.

According to the Apostle St. James, one of the principal defects of prayer is a want of confidence in God that he will hear our petition. "Let him," says the Apostle, "who wavereth [that is, he who has no confidence in the Lord] not think that, when he prays, he will receive anything of him." "A diffident prayer," says St. Bernard, "cannot penetrate into heaven;" because immoderate fear restrains the soul so much, that, when she prays, she not only has no courage to raise herself to heaven, but she dares not even so much as stir. Now she hopes to be heard, then she doubts, saying to herself: "I shall obtain what I ask; no, I shall not. God will grant what I pray for; no, he will not do so, or he will do so when too late. He will give it sparingly. I deserve to be heard; no, I do not deserve it. I am worthy of it; no, I am unworthy of it. God is merciful and liberal; but he is also a just God. His mercy is great, but my sins are too numerous and too great to be heard."

Hence it happens that, in this fluctuation of thoughts and doubts, a diffident soul at one time prays to God with patience, then complains of and murmurs against him with impatience; again she is resolved to wait until God is

pleased to hear her; at another time she loses courage, and feels angry because she is not heard at once. She is, as St. James says, "like the waves of the sea, which are moved and carried about by the wind," giving herself up to these thoughts and doubts, without making any serious efforts to combat them; especially so when she meets with any troubles, adversity, cross, or the like. Thus Moses began to doubt, on account of the unworthiness of the rebellious Jews, saying: "Hear ye rebellious and incredulous, can we bring you forth water out of this rock?" (Numbers, xx, 10.) In punishment for his want of confidence, he had to die in the desert. And the Lord said to Moses: "Because you have not believed me, you shall not bring this people into the land which I will give them."

St. Peter, also, when walking upon the water at the command of Jesus, and perceiving the great wind, began to doubt, and lose confidence in the word of his Master. Our Lord reproached him for it, saying: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (Matt. xiv, 31.) Therefore, if we wish to be heard in prayer, we must, as the Apostle says, "pray with faith." But this faith, to be good, must have three qualities: first, it must be the right faith in its true meaning, free from hesitation or doubt, as otherwise it would be infidelity or heresy; secondly, it must include confidence, or certain, firm hope, free from diffidence or despair; and thirdly, it must comprise a firm conviction of obtaining what we ask, excluding all wavering, or the fear of not obtaining what we ask.

First. The Apostle St. James requires, for prayer, the right faith in its true bearing; and not only a general faith in God's omnipotence, providence, munificence, veracity, paternal care and love for us all — that as God, he is able, and as Father, inclined to do good to us, his children; but

also a particular faith; that is, that he will give us what we ask, provided it be not detrimental to us. This is the very promise of him, who is Truth itself, and who can neither deceive nor be deceived: "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi, 22.; Mark xi, 23.)

We believe with a divine faith that God is faithful to his promises, giving us what we ask of him in prayer; and as it is impossible for God to deny himself, so in like manner it is impossible for him to break his promises. This faith our Lord often required of those who asked of him their health, or the like. To the blind, for instance, he said: "Do you believe that I can do this unto you?" And when they said: "Yea, Lord," he said to them: "According to your faith, be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened." (Matt. ix, 29, 30.)

Secondly. This faith produces hope and confidence, on which account St. Paul calls it "the substance of things to be hoped for," (Heb. xi, 1.) because faith in the omnipotence and veracity of God, is the strongest pillar and ground of hope, and of all things to be hoped for. For this reason St. Augustine says: "If this faith is gone, prayer is gone with it." (Serm. 35, De verbo Dom.) It is for this very reason that the Apostle said, when exhorting to prayer: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved;" (Rom. x, 13.) thus giving us to understand that prayer necessarily supposes, not only true faith, but also hope, by a natural consequence, because hope is the nurse of prayer.

As a river will cease to flow if its source be dried up, so, in like manner, there can be no longer any prayer, if its source, that is, hope and confidence, are gone. This confidence was likewise demanded by Jesus Christ, when he

said to the man sick of the palsy: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee;" (Matt. ix, 2.) and again, to the woman: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." (Ver. xxii.) From this it is evident that Jesus Christ requires not only faith, but confidence proceeding from faith. Hence St. Thomas Aquinas says: "Prayer derives its efficacy of meriting, from charity; but its efficacy for obtaining, from faith and confidence."

Thirdly. As faith produces hope and confidence, so, in like manner, do these produce a certain persuasion in the mind that God will grant what we ask of him. Now, the greater the hope and the confidence of the heart, the stronger will be this persuasion in the understanding to obtain the granting of our prayer.

This threefold faith makes prayer efficacious. It is, indeed, a great gift of the Lord to a soul, and almost a certain sign that he will hear her prayer, even though a miracle should be necessary to that effect, should this be for our good, or for the manifestation of the truth, and the glory of the Church. This is that wonder-working faith, that is, faith joined to a firm confidence in God's aid for the working of the miracle. This confidence is produced by an interior impulse of the grace of God, who animates the thaumaturgus (the performer of the miracle), promising him, as it were, his assistance for the miracle which he intends to work. Of this confidence Jesus Christ says: "Amen, I say to you, if you shall have faith and stagger not, not only this of the fig-tree shall you do, but also if you shall say to this mountain, take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi, 21, 22.)

Now, in order to conceive great confidence, we must

consider what God is in relation to us, and what we are in relation to him. (See here what I say in this volume in explaining the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven.")

4. We must pray with resignation to the will of God.

"And thy justice shall go before thy face." (Isaias, lviii. 8.) St. Cyprian, commenting on these words of Isaias, says: "That God will listen to and hear those prayers which are joined to good works. The Angel of the Lord said to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms;" (Tob. xii. 8.) and by the prophet Isaias the Lord says: "Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh." (Isaias, lviii. 8.) "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow." (Isaias, 1.) Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: "Here I am." (Isaias, lviii.)

And again it is said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" (Matt. v.) especially when they pray; for whosoever is good and liberal to the brethren of Jesus Christ on earth, to him Jesus Christ must be good, and liberal also; for he is, and he desires to exhibit himself infinitely better than any one possibly could be. We read in the life of the Bishop St. Julian, that he distributed among the poor and needy everything he possessed. Hence the Church says of him that, being inflamed with a great paternal charity for his fellowmen, he obtained from God many wonderful things. When the people were once suffering very much from a want of corn, he began to pray to God with tears in his eyes; at once several wagons of corn arrived, and no sooner were they unloaded than the men who brought the corn disap-

peared. Another time, when an epidemic spread rapidly throughout the diocese of this holy Bishop, God caused it suddenly to cease, on account of the prayer of his holy servant. The Lord also heard his prayer for many who suffered from incurable diseases.

But many a one may say, it is not in my power to give alms, to fast, to wait upon the sick, or perform any such good works; hence the means just given to make prayer efficacious, is, for me, not practicable. In this case you must remember that, besides these so-called exterior good works, there are others, called interior ones, which are better calculated to make prayer very powerful with God. Of these latter I will mention but one, viz.: the denial of your own will, in order to do God's will in the most perfect manner. "If thou hear the voice of the Lord thy God," (Deut. xxx. 10.) or, as Isaias says, "If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy own will," (Chap. lviii. 13.) in order to follow mine, as it is expressed in my commandments, in the doctrine of my Son, and thy Redeemer, and in thy rules, if thou art a religious; in the precepts of those who keep my place with thee on earth, and in my inspirations, I also will listen to thy voice when thou prayest to me. Hence Cornelius à Lapide says: "If you wish that God should do your will when praying, you must first do what he commands you. If you wish that he should turn to you, you must go to meet him; if you desire that he should delight in you, you must delight in him." "Delight in the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and he will give thee the requests of thy heart." (Psalm, xxxvi. 4.)

Now who can be said in truth to go and meet the Lord, and delight in him? He only who, with a cheerful heart, does the Lord's will. "His petitions," as the royal prophet says, "shall be granted." Hence our Lord said one day to

St. Gertrude, when she was praying for one of her sisters in religion, who wished that God should grant her prayer for divine consolations: "It is she herself who puts obstacles to the consolations of my grace, by the attachment to her own will and judgment. As one who closes his nostrils cannot enjoy the fragrancy of fresh flowers, so in like manner, the sweet consolations of my grace cannot be experienced by him who is attached to his own will and judgment."

Our Lord Jesus Christ expressed this also very clearly in his last discourse to his disciples, wherein he dwells particularly upon the three most essential virtues of faith, hope, and charity; of faith, by saying, "You believe in God, believe also in me;" (John, xiv. 1.) of hope, by saying, in verse 13: "Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do" (prayer being an act of hope); of charity, by saying: "If you love me, keep my commandments." (Verse 15.) These three virtues are most intimately connected with one another; for faith produces hope, and hope generates charity. The meaning, then, is this: If you wish to obtain what I promised you, and to receive what you ask in my name; nay, if you wish that I may ask it for you of my heavenly Father, or may even give it myself to you, you must love me, who have loved you so very much, and you must persevere and increase in love of me. Now you will accomplish this by keeping my commandments. If you faithfully and perseveringly comply with this wish of mine, I promise you an immense reward, viz., the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete." (John, xiv. 16.)

The grant of our petitions in prayer depends, then, on our faithful fulfilment of the will of God. "You ought to know, brethren, that God will comply with our wishes in

prayer only in proportion as we try to comply with his commandments. (Auct. Serm. ad Frat. in eremo, apud St. Aug. tom. 10, Serm. 61.) Hence we must not be astonished if we hear how the saints obtained everything from God. "He who honoreth his father . . . in the day of his prayer he shall be heard." (Eccles. iii. 6.) For those who honor their Heavenly Father most perfectly, by an exact compliance with his divine will, he honors by doing their will.

St. Francis of Assisi would often stop on his journey suddenly, as soon as he perceived within himself an interior inspiration of God, and giving it all his attention, he would say: "Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth!" He would stop as long as the inspiration lasted, listening to it in all humility, and promptly executing whatever our Lord would inspire him to do. Hence he became so great and powerful with God. One day, as he was praying in these words, "Lord, have compassion on poor sinners," Jesus Christ appeared to him, saying: "Francis, thy will is one with mine; I am therefore ready to grant all thy prayers."

For this reason it is that Cornelius à Lapede exclaims: "Oh, how powerful should we be with God, were we always to lend a ready ear and an obedient heart to his voice!" Like St. Dominic, we would experience that there is nothing that could not be obtained by prayer. Indeed, so good is our Lord to those who do his will perfectly, that he not only grants their prayers, but even anticipates them. Tauler relates (Serm. I. De Circumsis.) of a pious virgin, whose spiritual director he was, that many people used to come and recommend their affairs to her prayers. She always promised to pray for them, but often forgot to do so. Nevertheless, the wishes of those who had recommended themselves to her prayers were fulfilled. These persons then came and thanked her, feeling persuaded that

through her prayers God had helped them. The pious virgin blushed, and confessed that although she had intended to pray for them, she had forgotten to do so. Wishing to know the reason why our Lord blessed all those who recommend themselves to her prayers, she said to him: "Why, O Lord, is it that thou dost bless all those who recommend themselves to my prayers, even though I do forget to pray for them?" Our Lord answered her: "My daughter, from that very day on which you gave up your will, in order always to do mine, I gave up mine to do yours, wherefore I even comply with the pious intentions which you forgot to carry out."

Thus is verified what the Lord promised by the Prophet Isaias: (Chap. ixv. 24.) "And it shall come to pass that before they call I will hear." Would to God that all men would understand what has just been said, and practise it most faithfully! How happy would they make themselves, and others. Let us often say the following prayer of the Church, or one similar to it: "O Almighty and Eternal God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and charity; and in order that we may deserve to obtain what thou promisest, make us *love what thou commandest.*"

5. We must pray with perseverance.

When Holofernes was besieging the city of Bethulia, all men, women, and children began to pray and to fast, crying to the Lord, with tears in their eyes: "Have thou mercy on us, because thou art good." (Judith vii, 20.) But as the Lord deferred to come to their aid, they began to despair. Ozias, their leader, rising up all in tears, said: "Be of good courage, my brethren, and let us wait these five days for mercy from the Lord; but if, after five days be past, there comes no aid, we will do the things which you have spoken;" that is, deliver up the city into the hands of

the enemy. Now it came to pass that when Judith heard of this, she came and said to them: "What is this word by which Ozias has consented to give up the city to the Assyrians, if, within five days, there come no aid to us? And who are you that tempt the Lord?... And you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure." (Judith viii, 10, 11, 13.) Thus Judith reproaches the Jews and their leader for their rashness in having fixed upon the time, within which God was to come to their aid. This is not the way to obtain mercy from God, but rather to excite his indignation. "This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath and enkindle indignation." (Judith viii, 12.)

Jesus Christ has, it is true, promised to give us everything we ask of him, but he has not promised to hear our prayers immediately. The holy Fathers assign many reasons for which he often defers the grant of our petitions:

1. That he may the better try our confidence in him.
2. That we may long more ardently for his gifts, and hold them in higher esteem. "He defers the granting of them," says St. Augustine, "in order to increase our desire and appreciation of them."
3. "That he may keep us near him," as St. Francis de Sales says, "and give us occasion to pray with greater fervor and vehemence. He acted thus towards his two disciples at Emmaus, with whom he did not seem willing to stay, before they forced him, as it were, to do so."
4. He delays, because, by this means, he wishes to unite himself more closely to us. "This continual recourse to God in prayer," says St. Alphonsus, "and this confident expectation of the graces which we wish to obtain from God, oh! how great a spur and chain of love are they not

to inflame us and to bind us more closely to God!" We must not, therefore, imitate the Jews, by appointing the time within which God is to hear our prayer, as otherwise we would deserve the above reproach of Judith; but let us humble ourselves before the Lord, and pray to him with tears, that, *according to his will*, so he would show his mercy to us. If we are patient, resigned, and determined to persevere in prayer until he will be pleased to hear us, we shall not be disappointed in our hope and expectation to receive what we ask of him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us this when he said: "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." (Luke xi, 9.) It might seem that he would have said enough by simply saying "*ask*," and that the words "seek" and "knock" would be superfluous. "But no," says St. Alphonsus, "by them our Saviour gave us to understand that we must imitate the poor when they ask for alms. If they do not receive the alms at once they do not, on that account, cease asking; they return to ask again; and if the master of the house does not show himself they begin to *knock* at the door until they become so troublesome and importunate to him, that he prefers to give them an alms rather than suffer their importunity any longer." If we pray again and again, in like manner, and do not give up, God will at last open his hands, and give us abundantly. "When thou openest thy hand, they shall all be filled with good." (Ps. ciii, 28.)

If men sometimes give alms to poor beggars merely for the sake of ridding themselves of their importunity, "how much more," says St. Augustine, "will our dear Lord give, who both commands us to ask, and is angry if we do not ask." Hence St. Jerome, commenting on the parable of the man who would not give bread to his friend in the

middle of the night, until he became importunate and annoying in his demands, says: "Not only once, but twice, yea, three times, must we knock, and we must continue to do so until the door of God's mercy be opened." Perseverance is a great thing; if it become importunate, it will prove a better friend to us than the friend mentioned in the parable.

"Let us humbly wait for the consolations of the Lord our God," (Judith viii, 20.) and imitate the perseverance of the servants of God in prayer. Moses was a very great servant of the Lord, who would not have granted him a complete victory over the Amalekites had it not been for his perseverance in prayer. "By perseverance in prayer," says St. John Chrysostom (in his sermon on Moses), "he rendered the victory complete." Isaac was very dear to the Lord, and yet, in order to obtain a child, he had to pray twenty years for this blessing. "Isaac persevered in prayer and sighing to the Lord for twenty years," says the same saint, "and finally he obtained what he asked." (Hom. 94, in Gen.)

And how did the Lord treat the woman of Canaan? "And behold a woman of Canaan, who came out of those coasts, crying out, and said to him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil." (Matt. xv, 22.) And what does our Lord reply? He does not so much as even look at her, nor does he give her any answer: "Who answered her not a word." Still she continues to pray with great humility: "Lord, help me." But our Lord seems not to hear her; so much so, that even his disciples, being annoyed by her incessant supplication, "came and besought him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us." Instead of hearing her he rejects her, saying: "It is not good to take the

bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs." Who can discover, in this conduct of our Lord, anything of his usual kindness and condescension which he deigned to show even to the greatest sinners? Will he not, by his manner of acting, intimidate or discourage this woman so as to make her give up all hopes of being heard? But no, Jesus Christ had his wise designs in thus treating her. He knew her faith, and was much pleased with her confidence, which he wished to make shine forth more brilliantly. "But she said: Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." True, indeed, she wished to say, I am but a poor dog; but as such, I beg you to help me, O Lord. And the liberal hand of Jesus opens, and gives her what she wants. "Then Jesus answering, said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt; and her daughter was cured from that hour." Had this woman been discouraged by the first answer of our Lord, her daughter would never have been cured.

St. Monica (mother of St. Augustine) was treated in like manner; she had to pray to God for seventeen years before she could obtain of him the grace of conversion for her son Augustine. Had she become tired with pouring out prayers and shedding tears before the face of the Lord, in all probability the name of Augustine would not now be shining with so great a lustre in the calendar of the saints. For twenty years did St. Philip Neri pray for a high degree of the love of God. After that time, this gift was granted him in such a measure as has seldom been granted to man.

Not only were the servants of God, but even Jesus Christ himself was thus treated by his Heavenly Father. Prostrate on his face he prays to him, but receives neither relief nor comfort. He prays a second time in a most

lamentable voice: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me,"—neither is he heard this time. He prays a third time with greater intensity, and not till then did the angel come to comfort and strengthen him.

Poor miserable creatures, wretched sinners that we are! How exalted an opinion have we not of ourselves! The Heavenly Father lets his only-begotten, well beloved, most innocent and afflicted Son, like a poor beggar, knock three times at his door before he opens; and we think we have done enough when we have petitioned a few times at the gate of heaven! We complain so readily of being unmercifully treated by God, if he does not come at once to our aid, and almost despairing of being heard, we give up praying altogether. "Truly this is not the right way to pray," says St. John Chrysostom; "let us bewail our indolence in praying; for thirty-eight years did the sick man spoken of in the Gospel (John iv.) wait to be cured, and yet his desire was not fulfilled. Nor did it happen thus through his negligence, yet, for all that, he did not despair; but if we pray for ten days, perhaps, and are not heard, we think it is of no use to pray any longer." (Homil. 35, in Joan.)

We must, then, follow the advice of St. Gregory: "Let us be assiduous in prayer, and importunate in asking; let us beware of growing remiss in it, when it appears the Lord will not hear us; let us be robbers, as it were, doing violence to heaven. What robbery can be more meritorious, what violence more glorious? Happy violence, by which God is not offended, but appeased; by which sin is not multiplied, but diminished." (Comments in Ps. cxxix.)

If we wish, then, to pray aright, we must not only commence, but must also continue our prayer, especially if we ask something conducive to our own spiritual welfare,

or to that of our neighbor. Most men fail in this point, and this is the reason why their prayer is of so little efficacy. Never allow yourself to become guilty of voluntary despondency. "Keep firm to the promise of Jesus Christ," says St. John Chrysostom; "never cease praying until you have received. If you present yourself before the Lord with this firm determination, saying, I will not leave thee till thou hast granted my prayer, you will receive most assuredly." (Hom. 24, in Matt. vii.)

Let us say with the Apostle: "Why should I not be able to do what others have done?" What so many could obtain by their perseverance in prayer, why should we not be able, by our perseverance, to obtain likewise? What a shame will it not be for us to see, on the judgment day, how the saints of heaven, by their perseverance in prayer, have become what they are; whilst we, for our want of perseverance in prayer, shall appear so very unlike unto them! Most assuredly Almighty God will manifest his power, goodness, and mercy in us, as much as he has done in all the saints, provided we pray for it with the perseverance of the saints.

6. Our prayer to be heard must be followed by amendment of life.

The sinner who prays to God without having the desire to quit the state of sin must not expect to be heard. "There are," says St. Alphonsus, "some unhappy persons who love the chains with which the devil keeps them bound like slaves. The prayers of such are never heard by God, because they are rash, presumptuous, and abominable." The prayer of him who turns away his ears so as not to hear what God commands is detestable and odious to God: "He who turneth away his ears from learning the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." (Prov. xxviii. 9.) To

these people God says: "It is of no use your praying to me, for I will turn my eyes from you, and will not hear you; when you stretch forth your hands I will turn away my eyes from you, and when you multiply prayer I will not hear." (Isaias i. 15.)

Why was the Lord so severe to the Jews, his chosen people, inflicting upon them the hardest punishments, such as the Egyptian bondage, in which they suffered for so many years? How often did they not pray for their deliverance? And why did the Lord not hear them? The prophet Ezechiel says: "And they committed fornication in Egypt; in their youth they committed fornication" (Chap. xxiii. 3.) Hence they prayed and cried to God in vain. But no sooner had they done away with their sins of idolatry and fornication than the Lord graciously heard them: "And the children of Israel, groaning, cried out because of the works; and their cry went up unto God from the works, and he heard their groaning, and remembered the covenant which he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the Lord looked upon the children of Israel, and he knew them." (Exod. ii. 23, 25.)

The Ark of the Covenant was a great treasure for the Jews. When it was carried around the city of Jericho, the walls of the city fell down; when the Jews had arrived with it at the river Jordan, the waters of the river divided, the lower part flowing off, and the upper part rising like a mountain. Now, after the Jews had lost four thousand men in one day, in a war against the Philistines, they had the Ark brought into the camp, hoping that, for its sake, the Lord would protect them and deliver their enemies into their hands. And the ancients of Israel said: "Why hath the Lord defeated us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch unto us the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from

Silo, and let it come in the midst of us, that it may save us from the hands of our enemies. And when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was come into the camp, all Israel shouted with great joy, and the earth rang again." (1 Kings iv.) Now they thought they had no more to fear from their enemies, who, at the sight of the Ark of the Covenant, were panic-stricken, so much so, that they cried out: "God is come into the camp. And sighing they said, Woe to us; who shall deliver us from the hands of these high gods?"

With new courage the Jews began to fight again. Were they victorious? By no means; they were defeated worse than ever, losing thirty thousand men, besides the Ark of the Covenant. One might ask here, did God then cease to love the Israelites? Most assuredly not. His love still remained the same as before. Why, then, were they defeated in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, which was given to them as a sign of the divine blessing and protection? "But for the love of his Ark," says Theodoret, "God did not wish to protect his people, because, after having previously offended him, they did not repent of their sins. It was with sinful hearts they paid outward honor to the Ark. They shouted with great joy as soon as they beheld it, but there was not one who shed a tear of repentance, no one prayed and sighed with a sorrowful heart. Hence the Ark brought down no blessing upon them at that time."

"Why, then, should we wonder," said Dionysius the Carthusian, "if we see miseries and calamities increase among the Christians, notwithstanding their prayers to avert them? 'Tis because they pray with sinful and criminal hearts, not being sorry in the least for their evil deeds, nor showing the slightest desire to amend their

lives." Let them wear upon their person as many Rosaries, Agnus Deis, Relics of the Saints, Gospels of St. John, as they may wish; let them pray, nay, even cry to heaven as much as they will — all these articles of devotion, prayers, and cries will avail them nothing, if, at the same time, they are given up to the devil, and do not wish to give up his worship and service. Instead of being heard, they will, according to St. Augustine, be so much the more severely punished. "Punishments," says the saint, "become more frequent every day, because the number of sins is daily increasing."

If we, then, wish that God should hear our prayers, we must be sorry for our sins, and endeavor to amend our lives. "Above all," says St. Ambrose, "we must weep, and then pray." The Lord himself has declared this quite distinctly by the prophet Isaias: "I will not hear you" — why not? — "for your hands are full of blood" (Isaias i. 15) — full of sins and iniquities.

But, on the contrary, the Lord has promised, by the same prophet, that he will hear the prayers of those who truly amend their lives: "Loose the bands of wickedness; undo the bundles that oppress. . . . Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am" (Isaias lviii.) — that is, to help you. God commanded the prophet Jonas to announce to the Ninivites that within forty days their city would be destroyed. The Ninivites at once began to pray to God, and ask his pardon, God heard their prayers. Why? Because they repented of their sins, did penance for them, and amended their lives.

The prayers of a true and sincere penitent are acceptable in the sight of God, and are heard by him. Hence, according to the advice of St. Paul, we must endeavor always

to pray to God with a contrite heart: "I will therefore," says this Apostle, "that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands." (1 Tim. ii. 8.) When are our hearts pure? "When they are free from sin," says St. Ambrose.

From what has been said, the sinner should, however, not infer that, as he is a sinner and in disgrace with God, his prayer could not be acceptable to God, and that therefore he should cease praying. No, it would be entirely wrong for a sinner to argue thus; for as long as he does not sin unto death — that is, if he has not the will to live and die in sin, but desires to amend his life and prays for this grace — God will listen to his prayer, and hear it, if he perseveres in his petition. "There are others," says St. Alphonsus, "who sin through frailty, or by the violence of some great passion, who groan under the yoke of the enemy, and desire to break these chains of death, and to escape from their miserable slavery. Let such ask the assistance of God; for their prayer, if persevered in, will certainly be heard, Jesus Christ having said: 'Every one that asks receives, and he who seeks finds.'" (Matt. vii. 8.)

His prayer, it is true, is not heard on account of his meritorious works, which he does not possess, but it is heard on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, and because our Saviour has promised to hear every one that asks. "Therefore, when we pray," says St. Thomas, "it is not necessary to be friends of God in order to obtain the grace that we ask; for prayer itself restores us to his friendship." Hence St. Bernard says: "The desire of the sinner to escape from sin is a gift which is certainly given by no other than God himself, who most undoubtedly would not give this holy desire to the sinner unless he intended to hear him." Witness the publican in the Gospel, who went into the temple to pray: "And the publican standing afar off, would not

so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner! I say to you, this man went down into his house justified." (Luke viii. 13, 14.)

But the sinner may say, I have no sorrow for my sins, and I do not desire to amend my life; therefore, according to what you have said, God will not hear my prayer, consequently I may abandon it altogether. I answer, by no means give up, although God will not hear you so long as you persevere in these dispositions of heart; yet for the sake of your prayer God spares you, waiting patiently for your conversion. "No sinner," says St. Alphonsus, "should ever give up his prayer, as otherwise he would be lost for ever. God would send sinners to hell sooner if they ceased praying, yet, on account of their perseverance in prayer, he still spares them."

But let him who has no sorrow for his sins, no desire for the amendment of his life, let him ask of God this sorrow and grace of a thorough conversion, and let him persevere in asking for it. If he does, he may rest assured that God will finally enlighten his mind by making him understand the miserable state in which he is living, and touch his heart with sorrow for it; besides, God will also strengthen the will of the sinner, so as to be able to make serious efforts to rise from this fatal state.

Another will say, I have not only no sorrow for my sins, but I have not even the least desire to ask God's grace to be sorry for them. How can I, then, pray, not having the least desire to obtain anything? This, I must confess, is a pitiable but not a desperate state; for, if you will pray with perseverance, God will give you the desire to pray for the grace of contrition. Has he not declared: "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that he be converted and

live"? God has the greatest desire to see all sinners saved, and he is ready at any time to give them the graces necessary for their salvation; but he wishes that they should pray for every good thought and desire, and for efficacious grace to put their good desires into execution. Let such a sinner pray to obtain a true desire to pray for his salvation; let him persevere in thus praying, and then let him rest assured that he will not be lost.

The conversion of King Manasses is a most striking proof of this truth. Manasses was twelve years old when his father died. He succeeded him on the throne, but not in his piety and fear of the Lord. He was as impious as his father was pious towards God and his people. He introduced again all the abominations of the Gentiles, which the Lord had extirpated from among the children of Israel; he apostatized from the Lord; he brought in again, and encouraged, idolatry; even in the temple of the Lord he erected an altar to Baal; he introduced into the temple of the true God such abominations as were never heard of before, and which are too shameful to relate. To crown his impiety, he made his son pass through fire in honor of Moloch; he used divination, observed omens, appointed pythons, and multiplied soothsayers to do evil before the Lord, and to provoke him (4 Kings xxi. 1-7). The Lord often warned him through his prophets, but in vain. At last "the Lord spoke to his prophets, saying: Because Manasses, king of Juda, hath done these most wicked abominations, beyond all that the Amorrhites did before him, and hath made Juda to sin with his filthy doings, therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring evils upon Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them, both his ears shall tingle. I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the weight of the

house of Achab, and I will efface Jerusalem, as tables are wont to be effaced; . . . and I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies" (4 Kings xxi. 10-14).

Manasses, instead of entering into himself, added cruelty to idolatry. He shed so much innocent blood that, to use the words of holy Writ, "he filled Jerusalem up to the mouth" (4 Kings xxi. 16). According to Josephus (Ant. x. 13), "he went so far in his contempt for God as to kill all the just of the children of Israel, not sparing even the prophets, but taking away their lives day by day, so that streams of blood were flowing through the streets of Jerusalem." Now do you think so impious a wretch could be converted? O wonderful power of prayer! so great is thy efficacy with God that, should a man be ever so impious and perverse, he will not fail to obtain forgiveness of the Lord, if he pray for it with a sincere heart. "And the Lord," says holy Writ, "brought upon Jerusalem the captains of the army of the king of the Assyrians, and they took Manasses and carried him, bound with chains and fetters, to Babylon. In this great distress and affliction he entered into himself, and he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers, and he entreated him and he besought him earnestly; and the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem unto his kingdom. From that time forward he endeavored to serve the Lord the more fervently, the more grievously he had offended him. He abolished idolatry, destroyed the temples, altars, groves on the high places, put up in honor of heathenish deities; repaired the altar of Jehovah in the temple of Jerusalem, and sacrificed upon it victims and peace offerings, and offerings of praise, and he commanded Juda to serve the Lord, the God of Israel." (2 Paralip. xxxiii.)

I again repeat what I have said elsewhere: How great will be the pain and misery of the damned, seeing that they might have been saved so easily, provided they had prayed to God for their salvation! How true is not what St. Alphonsus says: "All spiritual writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, all confessors in their instructions to their penitents, should not inculcate anything more strongly than continual prayer; they should always admonish, exclaim, and continually repeat: Pray, pray, never cease to pray; for if you pray, your salvation will be secure; but if you leave off praying, your damnation will be certain. All preachers and directors ought to do this, because, according to the opinion of every Catholic school, there is no doubt of this truth, that he who prays obtains grace and is saved; but those who practise it are too few, and this is why so few are saved" (Chap. iv., on Prayer).

7. Our prayer, to be heard, must be united with forgiveness of injuries.

"And when you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man" (Mark xi. 25). "Leave thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 23).

In these words our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that our prayer will not be heard by his heavenly Father so long as we entertain in our hearts feelings of dislike towards any of our fellow men. If you pray, he says, and at the same time have aught against any man, go first and be reconciled to your brother, or at least forgive him from the bottom of your heart, and then come and offer up your devout prayers; otherwise I will not listen to you. He has made every man his representative on earth by creating him according to his own image and likeness; he

has redeemed all men with his most precious Blood; he has, therefore, declared that whatever we do to the least of our fellow men for his sake we do it to him. Now, by commanding us to love our enemies, to do good to those that hate us, and to pray for those who persecute and calumniate us (Matt. v. 44), he asks of us to give to him in the person of his representatives that which we can give so easily. It would be great presumption to ask his gifts and favors without being willing, on our part, to give him what he requires of us in all justice. To refuse this request of our Lord would, indeed, on our part, be great injustice. We ask of him the greatest gifts, such as the pardon of innumerable and most grievous offenses, final perseverance, deliverance from hell, everlasting glory, and so many other countless favors for both body and soul. What he asks of us is little or nothing compared with his graces.

I will give you what I can, says he, if you give me what you can; if you will not, neither am I bound to give anything to you. Hence I have said "that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything, whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19). Our Saviour means here to say that our heavenly Father is so much pleased with the prayers of those who have no wilful feelings of hatred towards one another, that he will grant to them whatsoever they ask of him; but if, on the contrary, they wilfully entertain feelings of hatred, their prayer will not be heard. "As singing is not pleasing or attractive to any one if the voices are not in perfect harmony, so neither," says Origen, "will the prayers of Christian congregations give any pleasure to God, if they be not of one heart and one soul, nor will he hear their petitions."

We must, then, whenever we betake ourselves to

prayer, banish from our hearts all wilful enmity, hatred, rancor, and all uncharitable sentiments which may arise in our soul, by saying a short but fervent prayer for all those towards whom such feelings arise, or by offering up to God for each one of them the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and all his merits, in union with those of his Blessed Mother and of all his saints.

To pray for those who wish us evil is an extremely difficult act, and one of the most heroic charity. It is an act free of self-love and self-interest, which is not only counselled, but even commanded, by our Lord (Matt. v. 44). The insults, calumnies, and persecutions of our enemies relate directly to our own person; wherefore, if we forgive, nay, even beg God also to forgive, our enemies, we give up our claim to our right and honor, thus raising ourselves to the great dignity of true children of God—nay, even to an unspeakably sublime resemblance to his divinity, according to what Jesus Christ says: "If you pray for those who hate, calumniate, and persecute you, you will be children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). For with God nothing is more characteristic, nothing more honorable, than to have mercy and to spare, to do good to all his enemies, thus converting them to become his friends, his children, and heirs of his everlasting glory.

Now, by imitating his goodness in a point most averse to our nature, we give him the greatest glory, and do such violence to his tender and meek heart as to cause it not only to forgive the sin of our enemies, but even to constrain it to grant all our prayers; because he wishes to be far more indulgent, far more merciful, and far more liberal than it is possible for us ever to be. Holy Scripture and

the lives of the saints furnish us with most striking examples in proof of this great and most consoling truth.

The greatest persecutor of St. Stephen was St. Paul the Apostle before his conversion: for, according to St. Augustine, he threw stones at him by the hands of all those whose clothes he was guarding. What made him, from being a persecutor of the Church, become her greatest Apostle and Doctor? It was the prayer of St. Stephen; "for, had he not prayed," says St. Augustine, "the Church would not have gained this Apostle." St. Mary Oigni, whilst in a rapture, saw how our Lord presented St. Stephen with the soul of St. Paul, before his death, on account of the prayer which the former had offered for him; she saw how St. Stephen received the soul of this Apostle the moment of his death, and how he presented it to our Lord, saying: "Here, O Lord, I have the immense and most precious gift which thou gavest me; now I return it to thee with great interest." ("Life," by Cardinal Vitriaco, lib. ii., chap. xi.) Œcomen is of opinion that, on account of St. Stephen's prayer, not only St. Paul, but many others, most probably received the forgiveness of their sins and life-everlasting.

In many instances St. Stephen has proved to be a most powerful intercessor and patron of all those who wish to convert, not only their enemies, but also other obstinate sinners. God granted him this power for his zeal, his example, and his martyrdom. Let us often invoke him to pray for our enemies, as he did for his.

Most touching is that which Father Avila relates of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. One day this saint prayed to God to give great graces to all those who had in any way injured her; nay, even to give the greatest graces to those who had injured her the most. After this prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ said to her: "My dear daughter, never

in your life did you make a prayer more pleasing to me than the one which you have just said for your enemies; on account of this prayer, I forgive not only all your sins, but even all temporal punishments due to them." Let us be sure that the greater injuries we forgive for God's sake, the greater graces we shall receive in answer to our prayer.

We read in the life of St. John Gualbertus that he met one day with the murderer of his only brother in a very narrow street. Fearing that John would take revenge on him, and seeing no possibility of escape, the murderer fell on his knees, asking forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who forgave his murderers, and prayed for them on the cross. John forgave him at once, and embraced him as one of his best friends. Afterwards he went to a church, there to pray before a crucifix; but oh! how pleasing was his prayer now to our Lord, and how powerful was it with him! Whilst praying, he saw how our Lord bowed his head towards him, thanking him, as it were, for the great offence he had forgiven. At the same time, he felt a most extraordinary change in his own soul, to such a degree that he renounced the world and became the founder of a religious order.

But some might say: I have no enemies; hence I have nothing to forgive, and thus I cannot use this means to make my prayer efficacious. In this case, say to God: Had I, O Lord, a thousand enemies, for thy sake I would forgive, love, and pray for them. Thus you will practise, at least in desire, the highest degree of charity, and our Lord will take the will for the deed. But you must remember that, if you have no opportunity to practise this degree of charity in reality, you will always find plenty of occasions to practise the degree next to it, which consists in bearing with your neighbors' whims, weaknesses, faults of char-

acter, disagreeable manners, and the like, trying to make yourself all to all. The practice of this kind of charity will equally move our Lord graciously to listen to your prayers.

In proof of this, we have but to consider the example of Moses. Notwithstanding the frequent murmurs of the Jewish people, their reproaches, their rebellion, their apostasy, he acted towards them with the same unvarying kindness; instead of taking revenge, he poured forth fervent prayers to God for their temporal and spiritual welfare. Hence it was that his prayer was so powerful with God as to prevent him from punishing the Jews for their sins so long as Moses interceded and asked him to pardon them. On this account, St. Jerome, St. Thomas, Hugo, Theodoret, and others, say that when this meek and forbearing charity is praying, it forces God, as it were, to listen to and hear its prayer. Let this be remembered by those especially who guide and direct others. (See here explanation of the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer.)

8. Our prayer to be heard must be for a lawful object.

God is our Father. Now a father will not give to his children what he knows to be hurtful to them. Should we, then, ask of our heavenly Father something that is detrimental to us, especially to our salvation, he will not hear our prayer. The object of our prayer, then, must be lawful, and conducive to our spiritual welfare, as otherwise it would be displeasing to God; and it would be unreasonable for us to expect that God would grant us something which is displeasing to him. Accordingly, God will not hear us —

1. If we ask for something that is detrimental to our salvation. "A man," says St. Augustine, "may lawfully pray for the goods of this life, and the Lord may mercifully refuse to hear him." As a physician who desires the

restoration of his patient will not allow him those things which he knows will be hurtful to him, so, in like manner, the Lord will turn a deaf ear to your prayers when you ask for such things as he knows will be detrimental to you. It is not forbidden, however, to pray for the necessaries of this life: "Give me only the necessaries of life;" (Prov. xxx. 8.) nor is it wrong to be solicitous about such things, provided our anxiety with regard to them be not inordinate, and we do not set our hearts upon them so absolutely as to make them the chief objects of our desires. We must always ask for them with resignation; and on condition that they be of advantage to our souls. We read in the life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, that a sick man, after he had recovered his health through the saint's intercession, said to himself: sickness perhaps might have been better for me than health, so he prayed again to the holy Bishop, saying that he would prefer being sick, if sickness was better for him than health; and immediately his sickness returned.

2. God will not hear our prayer if we pray to be delivered from a particular temptation, or cross (as St. Paul prayed for deliverance from the temptations of the flesh), which God knows to be useful to our advancement in humility, and other virtues.

3. Nor will God hear us if we ask for something from motives of ambition, like the sons of Zebedee, who prayed to obtain the principal offices in the kingdom of Christ.

4. God will not hear us if we ask for something from indiscreet zeal, as the Apostles did, when they asked our Lord to send fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who had rejected Christ our Saviour.

5. Nor will God hear us if we ask of him for a certain particular state of life, as, for instance, the religious or the

matrimonial, which he knows is not suited to our physical, intellectual, and moral constitution. The best prayer we can perform in such a case, is daily to beseech the Almighty to direct us by such ways and means as will preserve us from sin, make us more holy, and lead us to life-everlasting, saying: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." "Show, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths." (Ps. xxiv. 4.) "As we know not, O Lord, what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee." (II. Paral. xx. 12.) "Guide me, O Lord, by those ways, offices, actions, exercises and sufferings, which thou knowest will lead me most safely to Paradise, and to greater glory in thy heavenly kingdom; or, grant, O Lord, what Jesus Christ, my Redeemer himself, wishes to see in me; and what he wills should be given to me; and what, when dying on the cross, he asked for me." Or: "Grant me, O Lord, what the Blessed Virgin Mary asks for me; for she loves me and wishes me to be saved, and knows best what I need to obtain eternal happiness." This is a very pious and most efficacious manner of praying.

6. God often delays hearing our prayer if the object of it is not profitable to us at the time, but it is so only at a later period. One day St. Gertrude complained to our Lord because she had not obtained from him a certain favor for her relatives, notwithstanding the promise he had made to her to hear all her prayers. Our Lord told her that he had heard her prayer, but would grant the favor she had asked for at some future time, when it would be more useful to her relatives.

7. If our prayers are said, as it were, at random, without asking any particular grace, they are also more or less defective, and inefficacious. "You know not what you ask," (Mark x. 38.) said our Lord Jesus Christ to the sons of

Zebedee, when they asked of him that they might sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his glory. Alas! how many Christians are there not to whom our Lord could address the same words: "You do not know what you ask of God." How many are there who, if they were asked on their way to church, or during their stay therein, or on their return from it, what they sought to obtain in their prayers, would be at a loss for an answer, not knowing what they need, nor what to ask for. But it is self-deception to go to the altar and ask something merely at random. This is to be like a person who is sick and goes to a druggist to buy medicine, without reflecting whether or not it will suit his particular disease. Such a manner of praying is certainly injudicious, because it is not adapted to the spiritual wants of our souls. Hence we must see that our prayers be so ordered as to correspond with our particular necessities. "When at prayer," says St. Francis de Sales, "let us be like a strong, robust, and sensible man, who, when sitting at table, takes such food as will give him bodily strength; but let us not be like children, who grasp at sweet things: such as sugar, cakes, pears, apples and the like." Prayer is called the food of the soul, but it is so only when we pray according to our spiritual wants.

8. If we pray in too general a manner; for example, should a person, from certain circumstances in life, either from necessity or otherwise, be thrown into the society of another of a quarrelsome and irritable disposition, he would naturally desire not to lose patience, or become angry, or use uncharitable words or reproaches. Now should he pray thus to God: "Lord, give me patience, make me humble and charitable," this prayer would be rather too general and indefinite. It would be better to say: "Lord, make

me patient and charitable towards this person; give me also the grace to have immediate recourse to thee, whenever ill feelings begin to arise in my heart; at that very moment make me pray that I may have strength to resist them, for the love of thee." It is not here intended to convey the idea that to pray in a general manner for our wants is not good, but only that it is better to pray according to the particular circumstances of our wants.

Let us, then, always pray the Lord to hear us, not, indeed, according to our will, but to grant rather what may be conducive to our salvation and sanctification. Let us not be like the blind man in the Gospel, whom our Saviour asked, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (Luke xviii. 41.) "Indeed," says St. Bernard, "this man was truly blind, God finding it necessary to ask him what he should do to him. The blind man should have said: Lord, be it far from me that thou shouldst do to me according to my will; ah no! do to me rather according to thy will, and what thou knowest is best for me.

St. Jerome writes, in his letter to Salvian, that Nebrius was in the habit of asking God to give him what he knew was best for him. St. John says: "This is the confidence which we have towards God, that whatsoever we shall ask, *according to his will*, he heareth us." (1 John, v. 14.) Solomon is called the 'Wise Man'; and indeed, he manifested great wisdom when the Lord appeared to him and said: "Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee. And Solomon said . . . O Lord God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a child and know not how to go out and come in. Give, therefore, to thy servant an understanding heart to discern between good and evil. And the Lord said to Solomon: Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for

thyself long life, nor riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked *for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words*, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there has been no one like thee before thee, nor shall arise after thee. Yea, and the things also, which thou didst not ask I have given thee; to wit, riches and glory, so that no one hath been like thee among the kings in all days heretofore." (III. Kings, iii. 5, 6, 7, 14.)

Thus God praised Solomon for his wise prayer and granted him not only what he asked, but even far more than he could expect. Let us pray like him saying: "Lord, I am living in a wicked world, surrounded with dangers which lead to perdition. I am like a child, not knowing how to walk on, or follow the true way. Give, therefore, to thy servant an understanding heart to discern between good and evil. Make me understand how great an evil sin is, and how great a good it is to love thee above all things. Give me a great hatred of sin, and make me love thee most ardently to the end of my life."

When should we pray?

When we rise in the morning, before and after meals, in all temptations, at night before we go to bed, and especially during Mass.

We have already seen that we are obliged to pray, for no one has ever, or will ever be, saved without prayer. But when should we pray? The particular times at which we should pray are, in the first place, in the morning. Every morning we should offer ourselves to God by prayer, and should deem it an indispensable duty to do so. We owe to God all our actions, but chiefly the first in the morning. It is that which is most agreeable to him. It is by that first action we consecrate the rest to him; by it we draw

down the divine blessings upon all our works, and collect the grace of God for the whole day, as the Israelites in the desert collected in the morning the manna of heaven, which supported them all day. St. John Climacus tells us, that the devil is ever present at the time that Christians awake from sleep, that he may snatch away from God the first affection of their hearts.

In order to render the efforts of your enemy unavailing, consecrate yourself to God immediately after awaking. When you are dressed, kneel down, and with humility and fervor, adore God, acknowledging him as your sovereign Lord and Creator, and looking up to him as the One from whom you have received all that you have and are. Thank him for all his blessings — for the blessing of your creation, of your redemption by the merits of his Son Jesus Christ, and of making you a Christian, a child of the Catholic Church. Then offer to God all the actions of the day, praying to him that he would bless you and direct you in all your works. Recommend yourself also to the Blessed Mother of God, to your guardian angel and to your patron saint. Do all this in a short time and with great fervor, and thus you will have for it a great reward in heaven.

Well begun is half done;

But without prayer no work is well begun.

A virtuous and interesting little boy was accustomed to offer his heart to God every morning with great fervor, being mindful of our Lord's loving command, "Son, give me thy heart." This offering was, as it were, the soul of all his actions. "Whenever I fail in this duty," he used to say, "I feel dissipated during the day." He led a very holy life, and died at the age of twelve years, in sentiments of extraordinary piety. "My God," he often said, as he lay on his death-bed ready to expire: "My God, I have al-

most every day offered thee the sacrifice of my heart; I now freely offer thee that of my life." If we imitate this pious boy, like him, be faithful in offering our hearts to God every morning, we shall, like him, die in sentiments of true piety. (Arvisinet.)

It is also the custom of good Christians to pray before and after meals. All blessings both spiritual and temporal are from God. If we are grateful to God for his blessings, we make ourselves worthy of a continuance of the same. But if we are ungrateful and do not ask God to bless us, we deserve to be deprived of his blessings.

And in all dangers, temptations and afflictions, we should also pray. Prayer is the great means of escaping dangers, of repelling temptations, and of bearing with patience afflictions. When we are in danger of falling into sin, let us immediately have recourse to God by prayer, and God will preserve us from that dire misfortune. If the devil tempts us to offend our Creator, let us pray, and pray with all the fervor, of which we are capable, and we shall overcome the assaults of our enemy. *Pray*, our Lord says, *that you may not enter into temptation; for without me, that is, without my grace, you can do nothing.* Therefore, when temptations assail you, cry to God, "O Lord, hasten to my assistance." Ah! save me, lest I perish. O Jesus, my Saviour, have pity on me. Mary, my mother, pray for me!

When you are afflicted and enduring many sufferings, ask of God the grace to be patient and resigned to his holy will. Offer to him all you have to endure as an atonement for your past sins, and remember that the afflictions of this world, if borne with resignation to the holy will of God, will merit many blessings here below, and everlasting joy in the world to come. Place all your confidence in the Lord, and he will save you in all your tribulations.

Every night is another particular time that we should pray. If it be a business of importance to begin the day well, it is of no less to finish it in the same manner. In the Old Law, God commanded not only a sacrifice for every morning, but also for every evening; to teach us, that as we ought to adore him in the beginning of the day, so we owe him our acknowledgment at the end of it, thanking him for the graces and blessings which he has bestowed upon us and our works, and asking pardon for any offences which we might have committed during the day. And if, among these sins there should be any, that were mortal, rise not up from your prayers till you have deplored your misery. Beg of him pardon with all the contrition of your heart, and resolve that you will confess them as soon as possible. Entreat of him that you may not die in that wretched state; then when you lie down, recommend to God your soul and body, beseeching him to preserve you from all misfortunes that night, and principally from sin. Offer your prayers to the Blessed Virgin, your angel guardian, your patron, and all the saints together; and as at the beginning of the day you begged of God the grace to live well, so at the end remember to beg of him the grace to die well. End every day as you would one day wish to end your life.

Sundays and holy days of obligation are also particular times for prayer; for these days are the days appointed for us to attend to the service of God and the sanctification of our souls. On Sundays and holidays, we cannot engage ourselves in servile works, but quitting all temporal concerns, we should apply ourselves to those of our salvation. On those days we should, therefore, attend at church, hear the word of God, think upon heaven, call to mind our last end, and forgetting things present, employ our thoughts

upon those which are eternal. On Sundays and holidays, we should pray to God especially at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The time of Mass is the privileged time for all the graces we require. At that time we should beg of God to preserve us from mortal sin, to assist us in all our dangers and temptations, and to strengthen us against the temptations of our enemy. In idleness and amusements these days should not be spent, for they have not been appointed for riot and dissipation, but they have been instituted, that we may pay attention to the concerns of our souls; and so we should pray on those days more than usual, and more fervently and confidently when we hear Mass. Be always mindful of the great truth that the heart which is not moistened by the heavenly dew of prayer produces only weeds and brambles.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
The watch-word at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, "Behold, he prays!"

In prayer, on earth, the saints are one;
They're one in word and mind,
When with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray.

For whom should we pray?

For all men, even for our enemies; but especially for ourselves, our parents, and benefactors, for the pastors of the Church, and for the souls in purgatory.

The answer to the above question is explained in volume, "The Greatest and the First Commandment," p. 169 to 182. I only here add a few words as to prayer for ourselves.

We must pray for all the graces of which we stand in need, but we must be careful to pray for three graces in particular: first, for the pardon of all our past sins; secondly, for the gift of the love of God; and, thirdly, for the gift of final perseverance, and for the grace to persevere till death in praying for this great gift. We should ask these three graces not only in our meditations, but also at Mass, after communion, and in all our spiritual exercises. We ought first to pray for the pardon of all our past sins; because we do not know, and shall not know till death, whether they have all together with their temporal punishment, been fully pardoned or not. The Scripture tells us that we know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred. (Eccles. ix. 1.) And though God had revealed to us that our sins were forgiven, we should still continue till death to beg of him "to wash us still more from our sins, and to cleanse us from our iniquities;" for, after the guilt of sin has been remitted, the temporal punishment due to it frequently and generally remains. Among the temporal punishments due to sin after the remission of its guilt, the saints count the withholding of many of God's graces, which are necessary for our salvation and sanctification. Hence the Holy Ghost tells us not to be without fear about sin forgiven. "*De propitiato peccato noli esse sine timore.*" (Eccles. v. 5.) In order, then, to secure not only the pardon of all our past sins, but also the graces which may be withheld in punishment of them, we must pray frequently and fervently in our meditations for the complete and entire remission of all our sins, and of all the penalties due to

them. By frequent and fervent petitions for these objects, every one, even the most abandoned sinner, however enormous his crimes may have been, can easily and infallibly avert that kind of chastisement of sin, which consists in the withholding of certain graces necessary for salvation and sanctification.

Secondly, we must ask with fervor the gift of God's love. St. Francis de Sales says that the gift of divine love should be the object of all our prayers, because it brings with it all the other good gifts of God. Love is the golden chain by which the soul is united and bound to her God. "Charity," says St. Paul, "is the bond of perfection." Every act of love is a treasure which secures to us the friendship of God. "I love them that love me." (Prov. viii. 17.) "He that loveth me shall be loved by my Father." (John xiv. 21.) "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Peter iv. 8.) St. Thomas teaches that every act of love merits a degree of eternal glory. Acts of love may be made, first, in the following manner: "My God, I love thee with my heart. I desire to see thee loved by all men as much as thou deservest to be loved. I desire to love thee as much as the angels love thee in heaven, and as much as thou wishest me to love thee. I offer all I am and have to thy love and glory for time and eternity; and I ask thee, O my God! to help me to love thee. I ask thee to take away from my heart the love of myself and the love of the world, and to fill my soul with thy pure and holy love, that I may seek nothing but thy love and glory and my own salvation." Secondly, acts of love may be made by resigning ourselves in all things to the divine will, saying: "Lord, make known to me what is pleasing to thee; I am ready to do it, whatever it may be." Thirdly, by offering ourselves to God without reserve, saying: "O my God! do

what thou pleasest with me, and with all that belongs to me." Such offerings of ourselves to God are acts of love, very pleasing in his eyes; hence, St. Teresa used to offer herself to him fifty times in the day. To rejoice in the infinite happiness of God is also a most perfect act of love. In begging the grace of God's love we ought to ask the gift of perfect resignation and conformity to the divine will in all things, particularly in all crosses and afflictions.

Thirdly, we must, above all, pray with great fervor in our meditations for the grace of final perseverance. This is, according to blessed Leonard, the grace of graces; this is the grace on which our salvation depends. If God gives it to us, we shall be saved; if not, we shall be lost. This is the gift which distinguishes the elect in heaven from the reprobate in hell; if the elect had not got it, they should be lost; and if the damned had received it, they should now be in glory. It crowns all the other gifts of God; without it they shall be a source of greater damnation. This gift God gives to infants without any co-operation on their part, by taking them out of life before they lose their baptismal innocence. But St. Augustine teaches that God never gives it to any adult that does not pray for it. The grace of final perseverance is a special gift, which we cannot merit, as the Council of Trent teaches in these words: "*Aliunde haberi non potest, nisi ab eo qui potens est, eum qui stat, statuere ut perseveranter stet.*" (Sess. 6, c. xiii.) We cannot merit it by the sacraments, nor by penitential austerities, nor by alms-deeds. God has given us only one means of infallibly obtaining it, and that is by praying for it continually till our last breath. It is not enough to ask this gift once, nor twice, nor for a year, nor for ten years; our petitions for it must cease only with our life, and must be frequently offered in meditation, which is the fittest time

for asking God's graces. Whoever asks it to-day obtains it for to-day; but he who does not pray for it till to-morrow may fall on to-morrow, and be lost. In the preface to his book on the victories of the martyrs, St. Alphonsus says that in the *History of the Martyrs of Japan* it is related that an old man, condemned to a slow and painful death, remained for a long time firm under his torments, but when he was on the point of breathing his last he ceased to recommend himself to God, denied the faith, and instantly expired. Hence, in his treatise on prayer, the holy author says that "to obtain perseverance, we must recommend ourselves continually to God, morning and evening, in our meditations, at Mass, communion, and all times, but particularly in the time of temptations, saying, and repeating continually: Assist me, O Lord! assist me; keep thy hand upon me; do not abandon me; have mercy on me." In order, then, to secure the grace of final perseverance, we must not cease till death to pray continually for it. And in order to persevere to the end in praying for this great gift, we must unceasingly ask of God the grace that we may continue till our last breath to implore it of him.

"If," says St. Alphonsus in his book on prayer, "we wish not to be forsaken by God, we must never cease to pray that he may not abandon us. If we continually beg his aid, he will most certainly assist us always, and will never permit us to lose him or to be separated from his love. And to secure this constant aid and protection from heaven, let us be careful to ask without ceasing, not only the gift of final perseverance and the graces necessary to obtain it, but also to beg, by anticipation, of the Lord that great gift which he promised to his elect by the mouth of the prophet—the grace to persevere in prayer: 'And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants

of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and prayer.' Oh! how great a gift is the spirit of prayer or the grace to pray always! Let us, then, never cease to ask from God this grace and spirit of continual prayer. If we persevere to the end in prayer, we shall certainly obtain the gift of perseverance and every grace we stand in need of; for God cannot violate his promise to hear all who may invoke his aid."

CHAPTER VI!

The Lord's Prayer.

Which is the best prayer ?

The Lord's Prayer : 1) because Jesus Christ himself has taught it, and commanded us to say it ; 2) because, in this prayer, we ask for all the graces necessary for salvation. (Matt. vi. 9-13.)

We have seen how necessary prayer is for our salvation and sanctification. It is, therefore, a matter of the greatest importance to know how to pray well. He who knows how to pray well knows also how to lead a holy life. Hence our dear Saviour taught us not only the necessity of prayer by his example and by his word ; but he also taught us how to pray and what to ask of God.

St. Luke tells us in his Gospel (Chap. xi.) that our dear Lord was one day praying in a certain place. When he ceased praying, one of his disciples said to him : " Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." This petition was, indeed, most pleasing to our Lord. He granted it immediately. " When you pray," said he, " you shall pray *thus* : " Our Father, who art in heaven," etc. (Matt. v, 9 to 13.)

When our Lord says : " *Thus*" you shall pray, he does not enjoin on us to employ always the form of prayer which he has taught us. The word "*thus*" only implies that the prayer he has taught us is the most perfect we can use and is to be a model of all our prayers, both in regard to the *manner* and arrangement, " seeking first the kingdom of God and his justice," and to the *matter* : since this

prayer briefly comprises all that we can ask of God either for soul or body, for this life or that to come. Hence St. Cyprian calls the Lord's Prayer "the Gospel abridged."

The Lord's Prayer consists of a preface or introduction and seven petitions. The first three of the petitions directly and immediately regard the glory of God — "Thy name," "Thy kingdom," "Thy will" — the remaining four directly and immediately regard our spiritual and temporal welfare — "*our bread*," "*our trespasses*," etc., and indirectly, the glory of God.

The preface consists of the words :

"*Our Father who art in heaven.*" In explaining these words I must call attention to the fact that, whenever our dear Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us to pray he never uses the expressions: If you ask anything of your "Creator," of your "Lord," of your "God," and the like, he will give it to you. He always says: If you ask the "Father" anything.

When God exhorts us, in Holy Writ, to be mindful of him in the days of our youth, he does not say: Remember thy Father," but, Remember thy "*Creator*" in the days of thy youth.

Whenever God gave commands to his people, he did not say: Thus saith your "Father," but, "Thus saith the "*Lord.*" When God threatened his people to punish them, he did not say: "I, your Father, will visit you with war, famine, pestilence," but he said: "I will visit you with war, famine, pestilence, and then you shall know that I am your *Lord and God.*"

But whenever our Blessed Lord speaks of prayer, and wishes us to beg for his graces and gifts, he employs the sweet and amiable name of Father. "Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven." And again

“Thou, when thou shalt enter thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee.” And again: “Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you.” “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask for them.”

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that, when we pray to God, we should not address him as the Almighty, the Creator, or the Saviour, but that we should address him as our Father. And why? Because our Saviour knew that, unless we pray to God with confidence, we would not be heard. “Let him who wavereth (that is he who has no confidence in the Lord) not think that when he prays he will receive anything of him.” (St. James, chap. v.) Now in order to inspire us with confidence in the very beginning of our prayer, our dear Saviour reminds us of the fact that God is our Father, and that we are his children.

Now what is it principally that we must consider and admire in a father? It is his great yearning to communicate himself and all his goods, as far as possible, to his children. This yearning of communicating himself and all his goods in our heavenly Father is infinite — it is essential to his nature. This yearning culminates in the reproduction, or in the generating, of its own image. Hence, God, as Father, eternally generates another Self, who is his Son, his Most Perfect Image. He, together with his Son, sends forth a third Self, proceeding from both, who is their reciprocal Love — the Holy Ghost — so that the one and the same divine essence is quite the same in each of the three divine Persons.

But as God the Father cannot multiply his infinitely

simple divine essence, the infinite love which he bears to himself prompted him to the creation of things, which exist by him and in him, and yet are not himself. He made them that he might lavish upon them his perfections to a certain degree. To some of these creatures he gave a rational spirit — to angels and men. Upon them he lavished his perfections in a more special manner. He created man according to his own image and likeness. Were Paul your friend, and showed to you a perfect likeness of Peter, your most intimate friend, and asked you: “Whose likeness is this?” You would exclaim, “Oh, that is Peter!” So in like manner, were you given to see God and a soul at the same time, you would exclaim at beholding that soul: “Oh, that is God!”

Now if God created man according to his own image and likeness, his desire of communicating himself to him must be incomprehensibly great. Indeed, this desire of our heavenly Father never appeared more strikingly than in the efforts which he made in receiving his own image and likeness — the soul of man — after it had been lost by sin. To that effect he delivered up his only-begotten Son to the cruel death upon the cross, and gives him still daily to us at Mass, and in Holy Communion.

In the old German chronicles it is related that, in the battle which was fought between Maurice of Saxony and Albert of Brandenburg, the two sons of the Duke of Braunschweig fell beneath the sword. The intelligence was conveyed to the Duke in the mildest manner possible. The messenger, therefore, first spoke to him thus: “Your younger son has been slain.” The Duke, a man firm as a rock, betrayed no emotion, but concealed his grief behind a kind of sportiveness. “Who can help it!” he exclaimed. But now the second messenger came and told him that his

eldest son, a youth of excellent promise, had also been left upon the field of battle. The man of iron frame could no longer command himself; tears streamed from his eyes, and he burst forth into this exclamation of anguish: "Ah, this is too much!"

We know that our heavenly Father made the heavens to give us light and rain; the fire to give us warmth; the air to preserve our life; the earth to produce various kinds of fruit; the sea to give us fish; animals to give us food and clothing. All this goodness of our heavenly Father seems to make but little impression upon most of men. So the heavenly Father, in his love for man, went as far as his omnipotence could go.

His omnipotence went as far as the infinite love of the Father for man required it to go; in other words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son"; and what shall we say? Truly we must exclaim. "This is too much!" O God! Thou art Almighty, but thy omnipotence is not able to give us anything greater in proof of thy unspeakable love towards us! Thou hast given heaven; thou hast given earth; thou hast given thy kingdom; thou hast given thyself; what more hast thou to give? How prodigal art thou of thyself! Who will dare deny, after these considerations, that God is the best, the kindest, and the most liberal of Fathers?

The name of Father is dearest to him; by calling him Father, we bestow upon him more honor than by any other title, for it is something far greater in God to be Father than to be Lord. As Father he generates his Son, who is equal to himself, but as Lord he has created the universe, which is infinitely less than himself.

Oh, how great, then, ought to be your confidence, when you pray to your heavenly Father! Were you to ask a

favor of some president, or monarch, and should he refer you to your own father, and say, "If he approves of it I will grant it," would you doubt for a moment that you would obtain your request? Oh, how kind is our Lord! As often as we pray for something he refers us to his heavenly Father and ours, who is kindness and liberality itself. It is to him that we are to address our petition, saying: "Abba, Father!" This sweet word touches his heart. Absalom was a degenerate son; he rebelled against King David, his father, and yet how many and bitter were the tears which David shed when he heard of the death of his son. "The king, therefore, being much moved, went up to the high chamber over the gate and wept; and as he went, he spoke in this manner: My son, Absalom! Absalom, my son! who would grant me, that I might die for thee! Absalom, my son; my son, Absalom!" Oh, holy king, over whom dost thou weep? Is it not over a rebellious son who tried to dethrone thee in order to reign in thy place? Shouldst thou, then, not rather rejoice at his death? St. Gregory answers, and says: "Ah, I hear thee answer: Thou canst not fathom the love of a father's heart. Absalom, it is true, was an impious son, but he was my son; his death causes my heart to bleed, and makes me utterly inconsolable."

The prodigal son knew very well how guilty he was in the sight of his father; yet, remembering the affectionate love of his father's heart, he felt quite consoled and full of confidence, and said to himself: "I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." "But how can you dare," asks St. Peter Chrysologus, addressing the prodigal son, "how can you dare go and see your father, after having caused him so much grief? What hope can you have to be received again into his affections?" "Ah," answers the

prodigal son, "he is my father! It is true I have not behaved like a good son, yet, in spite of all that, my father's love for me is not yet dead. His heart will speak for me far more powerfully than I myself can do. As soon as I call him by the endearing name of father, his heart will be moved with compassion; I will go to him without fear."

With how great confidence, then, ought not we to pray to our heavenly Father, whom, as Tertullian says, "no one can equal in kindness and liberality." Our heavenly Father says of himself, speaking by his prophet: "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee in my hands." Jesus Christ assures us of the same thing, when he says: "And I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you." Suppose that your own father were now in heaven, and that God were to give him unlimited power to grant you whatever you should ask for, with what confidence would you not pray to your own father. Would you doubt in the least that your prayers would be heard? "No," you would undoubtedly say, "my father loves me too much to refuse me; I am certain that I shall obtain whatever I ask of him." Now, if you have so much confidence in your earthly father, whose love, after all, is but limited, how much greater ought to be your confidence in your heavenly Father, whose Power and Goodness are unlimited! To doubt, then, of God's Power and Goodness, would be to consider him less powerful and less merciful than even our own father, which would be rank blasphemy. Far be it from us to make ourselves guilty of such a crime!

If the relation in which God stands to us as Father must necessarily inspire us with the greatest possible confi-

dence, the relation in which we stand to him is not less calculated to do so; for if God is our Father, then we are his children. From all eternity he has generated his only-begotten Son. He still continues to beget, in time, children who are by grace what the Son of God is by nature, so that our sonship bears the greatest resemblance to the divine Sonship. In the act of justification, by which God frees the soul from sin, and sanctifies her, he communicates himself not only spiritually to the soul, by grace and charity, and other virtues, but he also communicates himself really, in giving the Holy Ghost. In coming personally into the soul the Holy Ghost is accompanied by the other divine Persons also, the Father and the Son, from whom he cannot be separated. Therefore, in the act of justification, the three divine Persons come personally and really into the soul, as into their Temple, living and dwelling therein as long as the soul perseveres in the grace of God. For this reason St. John writes: "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him." St. Paul writes the same thing: "He who is joined to God is one spirit."

By this grace of adoption we are raised to the highest dignity: namely, to the dignity of divine sonship; so that, in reality, we are the children of God; yea, even gods, as it were, not only accidentally by grace, but also really by participation in the divine nature. Men consider it a great honor to have been adopted by some noble family; but our adoption by God is far nobler, far more honorable. Adopted children receive nothing of the nature of their adopted father. They inherit only his name and his temporal goods; but we receive from God his grace, and with his grace, his nature. For this reason God is called the Father, not only of Christ, but also of us; because, through grace, he communicates to us his nature, which he has communi-

cated to Christ by hypostatic union, thus making us the brethren of his divine Son. St. Paul writes: "Whom he foreknew he also predestined to be made conformable to the Image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." And St. John says in his Gospel: "He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name, who are born not of blood . . . but of God."

By this grace of adoption the soul is most intimately united to the Holy Ghost, and thereby elevated far above herself, and, as it were, deified. By thus communicating himself, God raises the just man, as it were, to a level with himself, transforming him into himself, thus making him, as it were, all divine. Love enraptures the loving soul, raises her above her, unites her to the beloved, and transforms her into him, so that being, as it were, embodied in him, she lives, feels, and rejoices in him alone.

There are very few who know this grace of adoption to be as great as it has been shown. The holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church never ceased to inculcate it upon the hearts of the Christians. "Behold," exclaims St. John the Apostle, "what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God! Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God. . . . We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is." "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own, for you are bought with a great price: glorify and bear God in your body."

"Our first nativity," says St. Augustine, "is derived from men; our second from God and the Church. Behold, they are born of God. Hence it is, that he lives in us.

Wonderful change! Admirable charity! For your sake, beloved brethren, the Word was made Flesh; for your sake, he who is the Son of God has become the Son of man, in order that you, from being the children of men, might become the children of God. For out of the children of men he makes the children of God, because, though he was the Son of God, he became the Son of man. Behold, how you partake of the Divinity! For the Son of God assumed our human nature, that we might become partakers of his Divine Nature. By making you participate in his Divinity, he has shown you his Charity."

We are, then, truly the children of God. Now, the laws of all nations, in accordance with those of nature, grant to children a holy right to their father's goods, especially so if these were given him to be transmitted by him to his children. To illustrate: One day a poor man, called Peter, went to his friend Paul, and spoke to him of his great poverty. "My dear friend," said Peter, "do you not know any one who could help me?" "Yes, I do," replied Paul. "Go to Mr. Bonus, a rich nobleman; he will help you." "I am afraid," said Peter, "he will not receive me." "You need not be afraid," said Paul, "because this nobleman is goodness, liberality, and charity itself; he receives every one that comes to him with the greatest affability. Some time ago he issued a proclamation, in which he declared that he was the father of the poor, and invited all to come and tell him their wants. He never feels happier than when he bestows alms upon the poor. He is exceedingly rich. He had a dearly beloved son, to whom he bequeathed all his possessions; but his son died a short time after, and, on his death-bed, willed all his property to the poor, and made his father the executor of his will. Now, this good father considers himself bound in conscience to

distribute this property to the poor. There is no reason, then, why you should fear to call on him; you will certainly receive what you need." These words filled the heart of Peter with great confidence. He went to see the rich nobleman, and received all he asked.

Now we are all like the poor man in this parable. We are in want of many things. But we can also have recourse to a Lord who is far more compassionate and infinitely richer than the kind-hearted nobleman of whom I have spoken. This good Lord is our heavenly Father. He has issued a proclamation, which we find recorded in Holy Scripture: "Every one who asketh, receiveth"; and "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." God the Father also has given over everything to his divine Son Jesus: "All things are delivered up to me by my Father". His Son Jesus died, and made us heirs to all his graces and merits. His heavenly Father considers us as his dear children, who may, in justice, lay claim to the merits and graces of his divine Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ called our special attention to this right of ours when he said: "If you ask the Father anything in *my name*, he will give it to you." He means to say: "You must represent to your heavenly Father that he is your Father, and that you are his children, and have as such, according to all divine and human laws, an indisputable claim upon all his goods. This claim of yours is so much the stronger, as I have acquired it by my passion and death. It is not on account of your own merits and good works that you are entitled to the gifts and graces of my heavenly Father — it is solely on account of *my merits, my sufferings and death*, and especially on account of the power which I enjoy with my heavenly Father."

Now if God did not hear us when we pray, we could

accuse him of want of justice towards us, and of want of love towards his divine Son. But even to think such a thing would be a blasphemy, and utterly unworthy to God. God is, then, bound by his own divine justice and sanctity to hear and grant our prayers.

During the late war, a Sister of Charity went to an officer of the Union Army to obtain a pass to go South. "Please, sir," said she to the officer, "give me a pass, for the love of God." "I have no love for God," replied the officer. "Give me one, then, for the love of your wife," she asked again. "I have no love for my wife," answered the officer. "Well, then, give me a pass for the love of your children," urged the good Sister. "I have no love for my children," was the officer's reply. "Give me one for the love of your best friend." "I have no such friend," said the officer. "Well," said the Sister, "is there nothing in the world that is dear to you, and which you love much? Please reflect awhile." "Oh, yes!" said the officer, after a moment's reflection, "I have a dear little child that I love most tenderly." "Well, please, then," said the Sister, "give me a pass for the love of this dear little child." At these words the officer relented, and gave a pass to the good Sister.

Now God bears an infinitely greater love to his beloved Son than this officer did to his child. He is, then, also infinitely more inclined to hear the prayers which we address to him in the name of his Son. Ah! pardon me, my God, my heavenly Father, for having compared thy infinite love for thy Son to that of an earthly father for his child! What favor and grace canst thou refuse if asked in the name of thy beloved Son? Thou didst hear the prayers of the Jews when they asked thee anything in the name of thy servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and shall it be

said that thou wilt not hear a Christian who asks of thee in the name and through the merits of thy beloved Son? "So great and so powerful is the name of the Son with the Father," says St. John Chrysostom, "that for the sake of this name alone the Father grants most wonderful gifts." Oh! great, St. John Chrysostom, great, indeed, is the praise which you bestow upon the power of the name of Jesus! But were you to unite with all the angels and saints of heaven in describing the power of this holy name, you could not say anything more admirable than what Jesus Christ has said in these few words: "Amen, amen I say to you, whatsoever you ask the Father in *My name*, he will give it to you." "My Father," says Jesus Christ, "grants everything — nothing excepted — that is asked in *My name*; and in order to take away all doubt from your heart and make your confidence unwavering, I swear to you: Amen, amen I say to you, whatsoever you ask the Father in *My name*, he will give it you." These words, "Amen, amen," are equivalent, in the Hebrew language, to a solemn oath. Who, then, knowing that God has promised so solemnly to hear our prayer, can still harbor the least doubt when he prays in the name of Jesus Christ? Who does not see that such a want of confidence would be a great offence against the omnipotence, the goodness, and fidelity of God? No! God, who is infinite holiness and justice itself, cannot deceive us. He will not make a promise unless he intends to fulfil it.

Jesus knew all this but too well. He knew, at the same time, that every one has the greatest confidence in his own father; he also knew that his heavenly Father wished us to have an unbounded confidence in him when we pray. Now, in order to inspire us with this confidence, he calls our attention to the relation that exists between

God and us. He tells us that his heavenly Father is also our Father, whose love, fondness, and promptness to communicate himself and all his goods to us, is infinite.—“Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in *My name*, he will give it to you.”

Let us then say with St. Alphonsus: “As for myself, I never feel greater consolation, nor greater assurance of my salvation, than when I am praying to God and recommending myself to him. And I think the same must happen to every other Christian. There are several signs by which we can become morally certain of our salvation, but there is none so certain as prayer; for we know with infallible certainty that God will hear him who prays with confidence and perseverance.”

Do not say that it is presumption to believe that God is bound to hear our prayers. It would, indeed, be presumption to believe that he was bound to hear us on account of our merits; but it is far from presumption to believe that he is bound to hear us on account of the merits of his divine Son, on account of his own infinite goodness, and especially on account of the solemn promise he has made to give us whatever we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Palladius relates that Paul the Hermit one day exorcised a young man who was possessed by an evil spirit. The devil cursed during the entire exorcism, and said: “Whatever you may do, I shall not leave this young man.” The Hermit then commenced to pray to God most confidently: “Why, O Lord, dost thou not force the devil to obey me? I have now been praying for half a day, and yet he will not depart. Now, O Lord, I am resolved neither to eat nor to drink anything until I see this young man delivered from the evil spirit.” No sooner had the Hermit

uttered this prayer, so full of confidence, than the devil left the young man, howling and blaspheming.

Surius relates that the mother of St. Catherine of Sienna died suddenly, without receiving the last sacraments. Catherine then began to pray with unusual fervor and unlimited confidence in God, saying: "Is it thus, O Lord, that thou keepest thy promise, that none of our family should die an unprovided death? How couldst thou permit my mother to die without the sacraments? Now, O Lord, I will not rise from this place until thou hast restored my mother to life." And behold, her mother instantly arose from the dead, and lived for several years.

Most wonderful, indeed, is what St. Ananias obtained by confident prayer. The king of Babylon commanded the Christians to prove the truth of their religion by causing a mountain to move from its place; should they not be able to perform this miracle, they must either renounce their faith or suffer death. The Christians represented to the king that it would be a sin to ask a miracle of God merely to gratify idle curiosity. But the tyrant still insisted. St. Ananias, Bishop of Jerusalem, hearing of the distress of the Christians, went to the king, and, full of confidence in God's promises, said to him: "To show you, O king! that the promises of the God whom we worship are infallible, that huge mountain which you see yonder shall not only move, but it shall even move rapidly." The holy Bishop then said in a loud voice: "In the name of that God who has promised to him who prays with confidence the power even to move mountains, I command thee, O mountain! to rise, and move instantly towards the city." No sooner had the Bishop spoken these words than the mountain rose, in the

presence of the king and the people, and moved swiftly towards the city, like a vessel sailing before a fair wind. It swept away houses, trees, and everything before it. The king was filled with terror and amazement; and fearing that it would destroy the city, he requested the holy Bishop to cause the mountain to stand still. The Bishop then prayed, and in an instant the mountain became fixed and immovable as before. (Petr. de Nat. in Cat. Sanct. i. 9, chap. xix.)

Let us, then, be assured that God will never refuse a confident prayer. Our hope and confidence are, as it were, the coin, with which we can purchase all his graces! He bestows his gifts upon us in proportion to our confidence. God himself values our confidence exceedingly. We give him great honor by placing our confidence in him; for we show thereby that we distrust ourselves, and that we stand in need of his assistance. Whenever we betake ourselves to prayer, let us reanimate our confidence in the Lord; let us imagine to ourselves that we hear the voice of Jesus Christ saying to us: "Whatsoever you ask believing, you shall receive."

Yes, let us pray, but let us pray with confidence for great things, and great things will be given us. Let us pray especially to be delivered from darkness and blindness of the understanding, from attachment to sensual pleasures, from our sins and punishments due to them, and the Lord will deliver us from these evils. Let us pray for a lively faith, for an ardent divine love, and the great gift of confidence in the divine promises, and God will bestow these gifts upon us. "The hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." (Isaias, lix. 1.) "God is able of the stones to raise up children to Abraham." (Matt. iii. 9.) Can we

doubt this truth without being guilty of blasphemy? Oh, the great goodness of God! Did he not change, in a moment, the heart of Saul, and make him, from a persecutor of the Christians, a most zealous defender and propagator of the Gospel? Did not God change the hearts of the good thief, of St. Augustine, of St. Mary of Egypt, of St. Margaret of Cortona, and of thousands of other notorious sinners, and make them models of virtue, and ornaments to the Church? Now God will bestow the same graces upon us, if we pray to him with confidence. "If you, then, says our divine Redeemer in the Gospel, "being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the *good Spirit* to them that ask him!" (Luke xi. 12.) "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John xvi. 24.)

"*Our*" *Father*. Our dear Saviour teaches us to call God "*our*" Father, not *my* Father. Strictly speaking, it is he only who can say to God "my Father, because he is his only-begotten Son from all eternity. We, the adopted children of God, are many, and therefore we are taught to call upon him, saying: "*Our Father*." God is not only your Father, and my Father, but he is *our* Father. He is the Father of all men. "And now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are but dust; thou art our Maker, and we are all the work of thy hands." — (Ps.) By creation we are all of one essence, and members of one family, and by the work of redemption we have been united more closely together in a new life; "for in Christ Jesus," says the Apostle, "you are all one, you are all the children of God by faith in Christ." (Gal. iii.) By becoming man, Jesus Christ became our brother, and united us among ourselves, and as children to our

heavenly Father. By this expression, "our" Father, our dear Saviour directs our attention to all and to each one of our fellow-men, as having the same right to God as ourselves. By this invocation, "Our Father," he also directs our attention to the reason why we should keep the two greatest commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," because he is a Father. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," because God is thy Father and his Father — because he is our Father. — Beautiful word, that word "our"! It excludes the mine and thine, which are cold words indeed, and the causes of so many contentions. These cold words, "mine and thine," were unknown among the first Christian communities; they had but one heart and one soul, and therefore they possessed everything in common, and no one called anything his own.

In our cold utilitarian age, the words *mine* and *thine* are more common than the *our*. It is, indeed, necessary that a distinction of rank and station should be observed upon this earth. This distinction is of divine institution, but this distinction should exclude all pride. "I could never act as some do," said St. Francis de Sales, "who, as soon as they are raised to any dignity, try to enforce the honor due to them, and who will not deign to sign themselves in their letters, 'Your most humble servant,' unless they are writing to persons above them in rank. As for myself, it is hard for me to make any difference between those to whom I write. All bear the likeness of their Creator, and I subscribe myself to every one 'Your most humble servant,' unless indeed, my letter is addressed to Peter or Francis, my servants, who might think I was making fun of them were I to use this expression." "But, my lord,"

some said to the holy Bishop, "you are entirely too kind and forbearing; the wicked abuse your goodness, and, in all probability, ridicule it. The very worst seem to be the most welcome to you; you embrace them as if they were your dearest children, and yet you very well know how bad they are." "Ah" exclaimed he, "how agreeable it is to be blamed for being too meek. Why does God the Father allow himself to be called the God of mercy? Why did the Word made Flesh assume the name of a meek Lamb; and why did the Holy Ghost appear in the shape of a dove, the symbol of meekness? Had there been anything better than this divine virtue, surely Jesus Christ would have taught it; and yet he recommends only two points to us: 'Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart. Would you then hinder me from imitating, in the most perfect manner, a virtue so highly esteemed and taught by God himself? Do you think that we are wiser than God?'

"It seems to me that I love nothing but God, and the souls of men for God's sake. All that is not God or for God, is nothing to me. Oh, when will we see our fellow-creatures in our Saviour's heart? He who considers them in any other light runs the risk of not loving with a pure, constant, and unvarying love; but in this divine heart, who could not love his neighbor? Who would not be willing to bear with him, to put up with his imperfections? Who would become tired of him, or find him a burden? To help and serve my fellow-men is my constant occupation. It has pleased Almighty God to mould my heart in this manner. Oh, yes, I desire to love my dear neighbor so very, very much! Oh, when will our hearts be overflowing with meekness and love for our fellow-men! To them I have devoted my body, and every pulsation of my heart,

so that they may make use of them according to their wants. I even feel so great a joy in loving my very enemies, that were God to forbid my doing so, it would be hard for me to obey him."

These sentiments of St. Francis de Sales towards God and his fellow-men, must also be ours. It is only then that we can say in truth, "our Father."

These two words remind us of all the great blessings which God has bestowed upon us; they remind us of the graces of creation, redemption, sanctification, adoption and vocation to heaven; and consequently they remind us of our great duty to do all we can to please our heavenly Father—to pay him always due honor and respect, to put all our confidence in him and to love him above all things; for what can be dearer to a son than his father? or to whom does a son try to give greater pleasure than to his own father?

Again, these words "our Father" remind us of our duty to pray for all men, in order that we may have not only the merit of our own prayer, but also that of all others. What an immense, spiritual gain is there not in this manner of praying!

Finally, these words "our Father" should inspire and impel us, as it were, to lead a divine life by imitating our heavenly Father, at least in his charity and liberality towards all men. "Be, therefore, followers of God," says St. Paul, "as most dear children, and walk in charity." (Ephes. v. 1, 2.)

"*Who art in heaven.*" Every king of this world possesses a palace from which his power goes forth. He ennobles his palace and his palace ennobles him; he ennobles his palace by raising the city in which he resides to be the metropolis of his kingdom, and his palace ennobles him,

because the magnificence of the buildings, the splendor of his court and of his guards are signs of his power and grandeur.

Almighty God is the king of heaven and earth. Although it is true that he is everywhere, yet it is also true that there is a place which, in a certain sense, is his particular dwelling place — called heaven. “You shall not swear by the *heaven*, for it is the throne of God”, said our divine Saviour.

It is also said in the Gospel that, whenever our dear Saviour prayed, or blessed his followers, he raised his eyes towards *heaven*. He also often said, “My Father and your Father, who is in *heaven*, and he commands us to pray, “our Father, who art in *heaven*.”

Again, in the Acts of the Apostles we read that our divine Saviour, on leaving this earth, ascended beyond the clouds and returned to *heaven*. He declared that in his Father’s *House* there are many mansions. In a word, faith and revelation assure us that the kingdom of heaven is a real place of boundless extent and that it lies far beyond the starry firmament.

Here below, as we have said, God is our Father, because he created us, redeemed us by his Son, sanctified us in baptism, adopted us by grace, and called us to be heirs to his kingdom in heaven. Now, what will not such a Father do for his children in the world to come after he has done so much in this world to make them his children? Indeed, in heaven it is that God is the exceedingly great reward of all his faithful children. There the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost communicate themselves, substantially to each of the elect, giving themselves up to them in a manner most sweet and intimate.

On this account St. John says: “Behold the taber-

nacle of God with men; and he will dwell with them: and they shall be his people, and God himself, with them, shall be their God." Apoc. xxi. 3. "He that shall overcome shall possess these things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Apoc. xxi. 7.

As a king is always with his people, a father with his children, a teacher with his pupils, so God will always be with the elect in heaven, recreating and feeding them, and filling them with numberless delights and unspeakable happiness. They will constantly enjoy his presence, which was hidden from them here below; they will see God, and speak to him face to face, and he will penetrate them with ineffable sweetness and consolation; for "he shall be their God," their Father, their Protector, their Glorifier, their All.

"He will be their God"; that is, he will be all their joy, all their honor, all their wisdom, all their riches, all their good; so that the blessed exclaim, with the Psalmist, "For what have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth?" Ps. lxxii. 25., and with St. Francis, "My God, my love, and my all." Each one will possess God whole and entire; for God will give himself up to each one as much as he will give himself to all together, so that every one will enjoy and possess God as completely as if God belonged to him alone. "I shall be thy exceedingly great reward," said God to Abraham. "Thou, my Lord, art my portion in the land of the living." If a king sits on an elevated throne, he is seen equally well by all; he is present to all at the same time, and each one enjoys his presence as much as the whole assembly does; so God is seen by the blessed as an immense sun, as it were, and enjoyed and possessed by each one in particular as well as by all together; and just as fine music fills the ear of every

individual with as much delight as it does a large assembly, so God communicates himself, and all he has and is, to every one just as much as he does to all. Thus all and each one will, like a fish in the water, swim in this ocean of God's happiness and delight; being made partakers of the divine nature, they enjoy true, solid, immense, and incomprehensible happiness. They will retain, it is true, their own nature, but they shall assume a certain admirable and almost divine form, so as to seem to be gods rather than men.

As a sponge thrown into water becomes quite penetrated and saturated with it, so do the blessed become penetrated with the divine essence when entering into the joy of the Lord. If an iron be placed in the fire, it soon looks like fire; it becomes fire itself, yet without losing its nature. In like manner the soul, transformed into God by the light of glory, though it retains its being, is like unto God.

By virtue of this union they become pure like God, holy like God, powerful, wise, and happy like God. He will transform them into himself, not by the destruction of their being, but by uniting it to his. He will communicate to them his own nature, his greatness, his strength, his knowledge, his sanctity, his riches and felicity. In the plenitude of their joy the blessed will exclaim: "Oh! it is good for us to be here."

God, then, will fill the souls of the blessed with the plenitude of his light, he will fill their will with the abundance of his peace, he will fill their memory with the extent of his eternity, he will fill their essence with the purity of his being, and he will fill all their senses and the powers of their soul with the immensity of his benefits and the infinity of his riches. They see him as he is; they

love him without defect; they behold him, the source of all beauty, and this sight ravishes their mind; they see him, the source of all goodness, and the contemplation thereof satiates their souls with enjoyment. O sweet occupation! O inestimable happiness!

But that which shall fill up the measure of the happiness of the saints is "that it will never end." Here on earth all our joys are fleeting, and even those pleasures that remain soon become insipid and wearisome. We easily become accustomed even to the highest honors and to the sweetest pleasures. All the pleasures of this life are like the apples of Sodom, that grow near the Dead Sea—beautiful to the eye, but to the taste wormwood and gall.

How different are the joys of heaven! There our joy is ever new. We shall have all that heart can desire or soul conceive; and the more we taste of heaven's joys, the more we love and desire them.

Here on earth, no matter how great our joys, no matter how sweet our pleasures, they are always embittered by the thought of death. We may be rich, and are happy in our riches, but death comes and tears us away from all we covet; others shall spend what we have hoarded with so much care.

We are beautiful, perhaps, and vain of our beauty; but sickness comes, and all the beauty is faded. Death comes, and the fair form becomes a livid mass of corruption, to be hidden away in a dark, gloomy vault, lest its appearance fill our admirers with horror and disgust.

We are blessed with faithful friends and loving hearts, that sympathize with us, that rejoice in our joy, and weep in our sorrow; we have a faithful wife or fond husband, good, loving children, and are happy in their company; but death comes and tears away from our arms that friend,

that loved one, and all our happiness is changed into mourning!

This earth is indeed a vale of tears! But let us lift up our hearts. Look up to heaven. In heaven our tears shall be dried. In heaven there shall be no death, no separation. In heaven our joys shall never end. In heaven we shall praise God for ever, love God for ever, possess God for ever.

O happiness that never ends! O holy Sion, where all remains, and nothing passes away; where all is found, and nothing is wanting; where all is sweet, and nothing bitter; where all is calm, and nothing is agitated! O happy land, whose roses are without thorns; where peace reigns without combats, and where health is found without sickness, and life without death! O holy Thabor! O palace of the living God! O celestial Jerusalem, where the blessed sing eternally the beautiful canticles of Sion!

This happiness, even when enjoyed as many years as there are drops in the ocean, leaves in the forest, sands on the sea-shore, will be still just as new, just as great, just as delightful, just as incomprehensible, just as imperishable, as in the first moment when entering into the soul. At each moment God has ready new joys, new delights, new pleasures, new beauties, new sources of joy.

Truly, were the happiness of the blessed not so great as it is, the Son of God would not have paid so high a price to obtain it for us; he would not have become man, and spent a life of thirty-three years in poverty, contradictions, and all sorts of sufferings. He would not have ended it on an infamous cross; nor would he have given the great powers he has given to his ministers, such as to forgive sins, to change bread and wine into his body and blood. The true servants of God, of all ages, were deeply

penetrated with this truth. Hence they were willing to undergo any kind of torment and pain, even the loss of their lives, under the most trying and acute sufferings, rather than forfeit everlasting happiness. Thousands of ways were found out by devilish malice to torture the followers of Christ. And the martyrs underwent all these sufferings for the sake of heaven.

Kings, queens, princes, emperors, have renounced the world and shut themselves up in convents and solitudes to make sure of heaven by a holy life. And heaven was worth all this and more too; for St. Paul has said with truth: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

St. Cyril, while yet a child, became a Christian, in consequence of which he was maltreated, and finally turned out of doors by his idolatrous father. He was led before the judge and accused of frèquently invoking the name of Jesus. The judge promised the child to bring about a reconciliation with his father, on condition that he would never more pronounce that name. The holy child replied: "I am content to be turned out of my father's house, because I shall receive a more spacious mansion in heaven; nor do I fear death, because by it I shall acquire a better life." The judge, in order to frighten Cyril, caused him to be bound and led, as it were, to the place of execution, but gave private orders to the executioner not to hurt him. The holy child was accordingly brought before a great fire and threatened to be thrown in; but being most willing to lay down his life, he was brought back to the judge, who said to him: "My child, thou hast seen the fire; cease, then, to be a Christian, that thou mayest return to thy father's house and inherit thy estates." The saint replied;

"I fear neither fire nor the sword, but I desire a dwelling more magnificent, and riches more lasting, than those of my father! God will receive me. Do thou hasten to put me to death, that I may quickly go to enjoy him."

The bystanders wept to hear the child speak thus, but he observed: "You should not weep, but rather rejoice, and encourage me to suffer, in order that I may attain to the possession of that house which I so ardently desire." Remaining constant in these sentiments, he joyfully suffered death.

In all our joys or sorrows let us turn our eyes constantly towards our true home; let us look up to heaven, to the mansion of our Father, the palace of his glory, the temple of his holiness, and the throne of his grandeur and magnificence; the land of the living, the centre of our rest, the term of our movements, the end of our miseries, the place of the nuptials of the Lamb, the feast of God and his holy angels.

Such are the sentiments with which we should be animated when we say, our Father "*Who art in heaven.*"

Hallowed be thy name. Our future and true home is heaven. Oh, how full of joy and sweetness is that one word *heaven*, paradise! In the ear of the exile there is nothing sweeter than the name of *home*. What wonder, then, that the name of *heaven* should be so full of sweetness, since it is our true home, our home forever? When blessed Egidio heard any one speak of heaven, he was so overcome with joy that he flew into the air in an ecstasy of delight.

Now the first step towards heaven is the knowledge of God. "For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of those that seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) "And this is life everlasting," says our dear Saviour,

“that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (John xvii. 3.) “Without this faith, it is impossible to please God,” says St. Paul. (Heb. xi. 6.)

Hence it is that our dear Saviour has taught us, to ask of our heavenly Father, above all, the grace to hallow his name. But what is meant (1) by the *name* of God; and (2) by *hallowing* it!

When we have sufficient knowledge of a thing we give it a name to distinguish it from everything else. That name expresses the idea and image we have of that thing. We therefore name things according to the knowledge we have of them. Now, we cannot see God; we can never fully comprehend his divine essence. We, therefore, can never give a name to God which fully expresses his divine nature, as, for instance, the word “man” represents humanity.

We know God in different ways. We know him by the works of creation and by revelation. According to the different ways of knowing God, we give him different names. Knowing that he is the cause and origin of all things, we call him “the Creator,” “the Lord and the King of heaven and earth,” “the Lord of Hosts,” “the Almighty,” “the Strong” “the eternal Judge” and the like.

Knowing that God saved us from everlasting perdition, we call him “the Redeemer,” “the Saviour,” “the God of mercy.” “the Source of all goodness,” “the good Shepherd,” “the Lamb of God,” “Eternal Life,” “the Food of the Soul,” “Holy Communion,” the blessed Sacrament,” “the Father of the poor,” “the Friend of children,” and the like.

Knowing that God purifies our souls from sin, we call him “the Sanctifier of souls,” “the Comforter of the weak,”

“the God of consolation,” “the Light of the understanding,” “the sweet Guest of the soul,” and the like.

By the name of God we must also understand especially the name of “Jesus,” for this name is far more venerable than that of God. The word “God” signifies Creator; but the word “Jesus” signifies God the Redeemer and Saviour. Hence the name “Jesus” adds to the word “God” or “Creator” the new and greater title of Saviour.

In a word by the *name* of God is meant anything that expresses the eternal divine Majesty. “*To hallow*” something means either to make a thing holy, or to make a thing that is holy known and treated with due reverence. It is, of course, in this latter sense that the word is here used. God himself is essentially holy. Of all the perfections of God it is especially his holiness which the blessed in heaven praise and glorify. On beholding it the celestial spirits are all enraptured and cannot but sing constantly: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” (Apoc. iv. 8).

Now, though God is infinitely holy and perfect, yet all men do not know him as such, nor do all those who know him, pay him due reverence. We, therefore, beg first, in this petition, that the infidels (heathen), upon whom never beamed a single ray of divine revelation, and who now transfer the honor due to God to demons and senseless idols, may be brought to a knowledge of the faith.

Secondly. We ask of God that the Jews, who reject Jesus Christ our Redeemer may be brought to worship God in three persons and especially believe in Jesus Christ — the Redeemer of mankind.

Thirdly. We pray that all heretics may be brought to renounce their errors and profess their faith in the Catholic Church as the only true Church of Christ.

Fourthly. We pray that all the faithful may practically

show that they know and reverence God; and above all, that those among them who lead wicked lives and thereby cause "*the name of God to be blasphemed among unbelievers,*" may be converted and lead a truly Christian life; that they may repair the past, and, by their edifying lives, cause those who before, on their account blasphemed God, now, on seeing their good works "to glorify their Father, who is in heaven."

Fifthly. We pray that, as the name of God is unceasingly honored and glorified by all the blessed in heaven, so also all men on earth may unite in loving and praising the name of God. Hence, when we pray "Hallowed be thy name," we indirectly beg of God not only the grace of our own sanctification, but also the grace of the sanctification of all men. By trying to make the true faith known to those who know it not, in order that they may honor and glorify God in the manner he wishes to be honored; by trying to honor and glorify him as well as we are able, we acquire great merit, and hereby become holier in the sight of God, and the holier we become, the more God feels honored and glorified in us.

The honor and glory we can give to God is but finite. There are, however, two ways of giving God infinite honor and glory. The first is to say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, etc." To understand the true meaning of this we must remember that the three persons in God glorify one another with an infinite divine praise from all eternity. Now to say, "Glory be to the Father etc," is as much as to say, "I give to God that infinite glory which he has had from the beginning, that is, from all eternity, and with which the three divine persons of the Blessed Trinity glorify one another.

The second way of giving God infinite glory and honor

is to hear Mass. Christ is an infinite divine person. Every thing he did on earth to honor and praise his heavenly Father, was an act of infinite praise and honor. Now, when we hear Mass, we offer to the heavenly Father Jesus Christ, his well beloved Son with all the acts of infinite praise and glory he offered to him in the course of his life on earth, and especially when hanging on the cross. Make use, then, as far as possible, every day of these two ways of praising and glorifying God, in order that you may hallow his name as much as it deserves and is worthy to be hallowed.

The characteristic virtue of a good Christian is true zeal for God's honor and glory. A soldier is always ready to defend the honor of his prince, and a son that of his father.

How can you say that you love God, if you are indifferent to his honor? How can you say that you have charity towards your neighbor if you see him in danger of being lost, and not endeavor, at least by prayer and good works, to obtain for him the grace of conversion to God? Every faithful servant of God makes the first petition of the Lord's prayer, the object of his ardent desires and tears that the God of his heart and of all creatures may be known, loved and served by all men, but then it is the first part of his care and prayer that he may himself attain to this happiness of devoting to God all the affections of his soul and all the actions of his life; and it is to him a subject of perpetual tears and sorrow that he should have ever offended so good a God and so kind a Redeemer.

"Thy kingdom come" is the second petition of the Lord's Prayer. The "kingdom" of God may mean, in a general way, (1.) God's universal, supreme dominion, which he at all times exercised over all creatures. "Thy kingdom

is the kingdom of all ages." (Ps. 144.) This, of course, is not what we pray for in this petition.

(2.) In a special way, "kingdom" means God's spiritual reign of grace, which he exercised from the beginning in the souls of some just men, and from the time of the Incarnation, throughout all those nations who were, it is true, ruled over by the devil for whole centuries, but were afterwards converted to him.

(3.) By "kingdom" is understood the kingdom of God in heaven, where he reigns sovereignly over the angels and saints and renders them unspeakably happy.

(4.) By "kingdom" of God is meant that most perfect, triumphant reign of his power, justice and grace — the final consummation of his glory when all his enemies, even the infernal spirits of every order, who, in this world, wage war against the extension of God's glory and the salvation of mankind, are brought to nought and trampled under foot; and "death itself, the last enemy, shall be swallowed up in victory." "Then God will be all in all, exercising a universal sway and unopposed dominion, by the punishment of the reprobate and the glorification of his faithful servants. This kingdom of God will begin after the general judgment. *"Come ye blessed possess the kingdom"* etc. It is chiefly this kingdom we pray for when we say "Thy kingdom come." We therefore ask, in this petition, that the final glory of God's glory may arrive. And, although this shall most certainly come whether we will it or not, yet our divine Saviour wishes to remind us that we should prepare, during our life on earth, for that kingdom where we are to reign with God and Christ forever, and also that we should so regulate our conversation and our consciences as to look forward, with firm, unwavering confidence, to the coming of God's kingdom, and, re-

lying on his infinite fatherly goodness, patiently hope to be sharers in his unspeakable bliss. The inheritance, then, which "our Father who is in heaven" has in store for us, is a "kingdom" to which we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ, his Son — a kingdom of infinite bliss "which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard," after which St. Paul longed — "I long to be dissolved," "unhappy man that I am who shall deliver me," and after which all the saints sighed — "Woe to me that my sojourn is prolonged."

(5.) By "kingdom" of God is meant the holy Roman Catholic Church on earth. This Church is often called "the kingdom of God" in Holy Writ, because it is in her alone that God reigns on earth, as she alone possesses the true faith and religion of Christ, and is, on this account, the threshold for entering the kingdom of eternal glory. Hence, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we ask of God the universal extension of the Church all over the world. By this universal extension of the Church, throughout every part of the world, the coming of the most perfect kingdom of God, as mentioned above, shall be accelerated. For, it is commonly believed that, before the Day of Judgment, the Gospel shall be preached, at least successively, throughout every part of the world; that all nations shall embrace the faith and enter the Church, even the Jews who shall then be converted — "The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. And so all Israel should be saved, as it is written: "There shall come out of Sion he that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. xi. 26.)

"*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" is the third petition of the Lord's Prayer. The only way of obtaining admission to the everlasting kingdom of heaven is to do God's holy will on earth. For "not every one that

saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) In the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, therefore, we ask of God the grace always to will what he wills, and to will it in the manner, and in every one of its circumstances he wills it; in other words, we ask God to give us the grace to do his will on earth as readily and cheerfully as the angels do it in heaven.

Now the will of God may be understood in two ways. There is the will of God *signified*, and the will of *his good pleasure*. The signified will is divided into four parts which are: (1) The commandments of God and of the Church. (2) Counsels. (3) Inspirations. (4) Rules and Constitution, for those who have embraced the religious life.

Every one must obey the commandments of God and of the Church, because it is the absolute will of God that we should obey them in order to be saved.

As to the holy will of God manifested in the counsels, "Our dear Lord wills, indeed, says St. Francis de Sales," "that we should observe them, yet not as commandments, but only by way of desire." Therefore we do not lose charity, nor separate ourselves from God, when we have not the courage to follow and practise the counsels. We ought not even to wish to undertake the practice of all, but only of those which are most in conformity with our vocation, for some of them are so opposed to each other, that it would be quite impossible to embrace the practice of the one without taking away the means of practising the other.

"It is a counsel to leave everything in order to follow our Lord stripped of all things. It is a counsel to give alms. Tell me how can he give alms who has left all he

had, since he has nothing? We must then follow the counsels which God wills we should follow, and not suppose that he has given them all in order that we should embrace them all.

The will of God is also made known to us by inspirations. God, however, does not wish that we judge for ourselves whether what is inspired be his will, still less does he wish that we should follow his inspiration at random. His will is that we should have recourse in doubtful and important matters, to those whom he has placed over us to guide us, and that we should be perfectly submissive to their advice and to their opinion in what concerns the perfection of our souls. To the members of religious orders the will of God is also made known in their rules and constitutions, as being so many fit means of leading them to perfection. This, then, is the way that God shows us his will, which we call *signified will*.

There is also the *will of the good pleasure of God*. This will of God's good pleasure relates to the events which we cannot foresee; as, for example, I do not know whether I shall die to-morrow. Now I see that it is the good pleasure of God that I should die, and therefore I abandon myself to his good pleasure, and die willingly. Again, I do not know whether in the coming year all the fruits of the earth will be destroyed by storms. If it happen that they are, or that there is a plague, or any other such event, it is quite evident that it is the good pleasure of God, and therefore I conform myself thereto.

To this will of God's good pleasure we should submit in all events, in sickness, in death, in temptations, in afflictions, in consolation, in adversity and prosperity, in short, in all things that are not foreseen, and that are not clearly against the *signified will* of God, for that takes the prece-

dence. What I have just said will be better understood from the following example.

During the whole time that St. Anselmus was Prior and Abbot of his monastery, he was exceedingly beloved by every one because he was very condescending, yielding to the wishes of all, both clergy and laity. Some one came and said to him: "My Father, you ought to take a little of this dish," he said that he would take some. Another one came and said to him: "My Father, that will not agree with you," and he immediately left it untouched. Thus in all things, wherein God was not offended, he submitted his will to that of his brethren, and even to that of strangers. However, this great pliancy and condescension of the saint was not approved by all. Some represented to him that he should not yield so easily to the will of others, that as subjects of his it was rather their duty to accommodate themselves to his will. "Alas! my dear children," exclaimed the saint," probably you do not know with what intention I do this. Let us remember that our Lord commands us to do to others as we wish others to do to ourselves. How, then, could I act otherwise. I wish that God should do my will, and therefore I do gladly the will of others, in order that it may please God sometimes to do mine.

"I have another reason. I firmly believe that, after the signified will of God, I can know the will of his good pleasure in no better way than by the voice of another. God does not speak in person to me, nor does he send his angels to declare to me what is pleasing to him. Stones, plants, and animals cannot speak. It is, therefore, only by men that I can learn the will of God. Hence I do what they tell me, and I believe that, in obeying men, I obey God himself who, through them, makes his will known to me.

“Moreover, God commands us to keep up charity and union with our neighbor. Now, in my opinion, there is no better means to preserve this charity and union, than to be sweet and condescending. Sweet and humble condescension should always preside over all our actions.

“Besides this, has not our Lord said that if we do not become as little children, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven? Be not astonished, then, if you see me ready to do like a child, the will of others. In doing it, I do no more than what my God and Saviour requires of me. And after all, it matters little whether I do this or that; whether I go to this place or to that; but it would indeed be a great imperfection, if, in matters of so little importance, I would not do the will of my neighbor.”

You see how yielding this saint was in everything that was not contrary to the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, or to his rules the observance of which must, of course, be preferred to everything else. Had any one required him to do something contrary to the commandments, or his rules, he would not have done it.

The glorious St. Paul, after having said that nothing should separate him from the charity of God, neither life, nor death, nor even the angels, nor all hell, if it combined against him, would have the power; says, “I know nothing better than to render myself all things to all men, to rejoice with them that rejoice, to weep with them that weep, and, in short, to make myself one with every one.”

As St. Pachonius was one day making mats, a boy, looking at what the saint was doing, said to him: “Oh, Father, you are not doing it well; that is not the way it should be done.” The great saint, though he made those mats very well, nevertheless got up directly, and went to sit down near the boy who showed him how to do it. There

was a religious who said to him: "Father, you are doing two wrong things by yielding to the will of this boy, for you expose him to the danger of vanity, and you spoil your mats, for they were better, as you were making them." The blessed Father answered: "Brother, if God permits the boy to be vain he will perhaps in return give me humility, and I can afterwards give some to this boy." There is not much danger in twisting the reeds this way or that to make the mats; but there would be great danger, if we did not bear in mind that celebrated word of our Saviour: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii.)—Oh, how good it is to be thus pliable and easily turned in any direction.

You might say: "I see clearly that what I am desired to do proceeds from a human will and a natural inclination, and therefore God has not inspired those who order it." It may be that God has not inspired it, but he inspires you to do it; and by failing to do it you go against the determination to do the will of God in all things, and consequently against the care you ought to take of your perfection. In order, then, to do the will of God, we must always submit to do all that is required of us, provided it be not contrary to his signified will.

But you may ask again, "why should I rather do other people's will than mine? Is not mine as conformable to God as theirs? For what reason have I to think that, what they tell me to do is more an inspiration of God than my will wishing to do the contrary?" O God! it is here where the divine majesty desires us to gain the prize of submission. For if we always saw very distinctly that people had good reasons for ordering or begging us to do this or that, we should have neither great merit nor great

repugnance. But when the reasons are hidden from us, then it is that our will is repugnant and our judgment resists, and we feel the contradiction.

Now, it is on these occasions that we ought to overcome ourselves, and with a simplicity altogether childlike, set ourselves to work without discussing or reasoning about it, and say: I know, it is the will of God that I should do the will of another rather than my own, and so I submit.

If we ought to comply thus with the will of every body, much more ought we to do so with the will of our superior whom we should esteem as the person of God himself, for he is his vicar. If he should be led by his natural faults of character and dispositions to command or reprove us, we must not be astonished at his unpleasant manner of acting; for no man is without faults; but we should refrain from judging that his commands proceed from passion. Nevertheless, if it is evident that he is actuated by passion, we should not be weary of obeying sweetly and lovingly, and of submitting ourselves with humility to correction.

It is, in reality, a thing very hard to self-love to be subject to all these encounters, but that is not the love which we ought to please or listen to; we should rather please and listen to the love of our souls, Jesus, who requires of us a holy imitation of the perfect obedience which he rendered, not only to the most just and holy will of his Father, but also to that of his parents, and even to that of his enemies, who, without doubt, followed their passions in the sufferings which they prepared for him; and nevertheless the good Jesus did not grow weary of submitting himself thereto sweetly, humbly and lovingly." It can be easily seen that the words of our Lord, ordering

us to take up our daily cross, should be understood of receiving willingly the contradictions we meet with on all occasions through holy obedience, though they may be trifling and of little importance.

The following is another admirable example which will make us understand the value of small crosses, that is to say, of obedience, condescension, and pliability, in following the will of every one, especially of superiors. St. Gertrude was a religious in a monastery, the Superior of which knew very well that this sister was of a weak and delicate constitution. Therefore she treated her more tenderly than she did the other religious, not permitting her to practise the austerities that were customary in that order. What do you think the poor sister did to become a saint? Nothing more than simply submit to the will of the Mother; and though fervor made her desire to do what the others did, yet she never expressed the desire, for when she was ordered to go to bed, she went simply without reply, being sure that she would, by obedience, enjoy the presence of her divine Spouse as well in bed, as in the choir with her sisters and companions. And as a proof of the great peace and tranquillity of soul that she acquired by this practice, our Lord revealed to St. Mechtildis, her companion, that if any one wished to find him in this life, he must be sought first in the Blessed Sacrament, and then in the heart of St. Gertrude. We need not be surprised at this, since the divine Spouse says in the Canticle of Canticles that the place where he reposes is in the sunshine of mid-day. He does not say that he reposes in the evening or in the morning; but in mid day, because at mid-day there is no shade. And the heart of this great saint was a true mid-day, where there was no shadow of scruple or of self-will; and therefore her soul fully enjoyed her

beloved, who took delight in her. In short obedience is the salt which gives taste and savor to all our actions, and makes them merit eternal life. Hence the secret of the saints is :

To play through life a perfect part,
 Unnoticed and unknown,
 To seek no rest in any heart,
 Save only God's alone ;
 In little things to own no will,
 To have no share in great,
 To find the labor ready still,
 And for the crown to wait.

Upon the brow to bear no trace
 Of more than common care ;
 To write no secret in the face
 For men to read it there ;
 The daily cross to clasp and bless
 With such familiar zeal,
 As hides from all that not the less,
 The daily weight you feel.

In toils that praise will never pay,
 To see your life go past,
 To meet in every coming day
 Twin sister of the last ;
 To hear of high, heroic things,
 And yield them reverence due,
 But feel life's daily offerings
 Are far more fit for you.

To woo no secret, soft disguise,
 To which self-love is prone,
 Unnoticed by all other eyes,
 Unworthy in your own ;
 To yield with such a happy art,
 That no one thinks you care,
 And say to your poor bleeding heart
 "How little can you bear."

Oh ! 'tis a pathway hard to choose,
 A struggle hard to share,
 For human pride would still refuse,
 The nameless trials there ;
 But since we know the gate is low
 That leads to heavenly bliss,
 What higher grace could God bestow
 Than such a life as this !

With what devotion and fervor, then, ought we not to pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," in order to obtain the unspeakable grace never to seek anything in this world, nor wish for anything so much as the holy will of God. If we substitute God's will for ours, then our will will always be done. Then our life will resemble that of the angels in heaven; then, too, there will be no hell for us, for what else does God punish in hell than self-will? We wonder at the readiness and great pleasure with which St. Gertrude submitted her will to God's will in everything and under all circumstances and trials. But God gave her this grace because she recited the petition "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," three hundred and sixty-five times a day. If we were as fervent and persevering in asking for this grace, the Lord would grant it to us as readily as he granted it to St. Gertrude and to all his holy servants, for by nothing do we give greater glory to God than by doing his will, the better it is done by us, the more he reigns among us, and never are we more our own enemies than when we oppose the holy will of God.

"*Give us this day our daily bread,*" is the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. After having asked of God in the first three petitions whatever may conduce to the glory of God, we beg in this and the following petitions for the daily food of body and soul — for whatever may contribute towards our salvation. In the preceding petitions we asked indirectly the grace of God; but in this petition we ask it directly and positively.

The word "bread," in Scriptural language, means all necessaries for the soul as well as for the body. By bread are meant not only the food and raiment which our body needs, but also the *spiritual bread*, or nourishment of our souls, such as the *word of God*, the *grace of God*, and the

holy Sacraments—especially the *Blessed Eucharist* — which Christ instituted for the sanctification and nourishment of our souls, and without which the soul is weak and feeble. The *word of God* nourishes the soul. It preserves the just, and makes them advance in justice. It heals sinners, and leads them back to the life of grace which they have lost. The *grace of God* is as necessary for the life of the soul, as material bread is to preserve the life of the body. We stand continually in need of its assistance; and God wills that to obtain it, we pray for it *daily*. The *Holy Eucharist* is the nourishment of the soul. Jesus Christ himself assures us of it; for he says to us: “Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.” (John vi.) Thus far as regards the wants of the soul.

God is the source of every good — it is he who provides for all our wants both as to soul and body. We are all in his sight as beggars, who possess nothing. The rich themselves are to ask for the sustenance of the body as well as the poor; because the rich, as well as the poor depend on God. Yet the rich and poor are to desire only a moderate competency; and therefore only allowed to ask for the bread of the day — “Our daily bread.” We say in this petition, “give us this day,” and not *give me this day*, to signify the brotherly love which Christians are to have for one another, and to remind them that they are to wish unto others what they wish unto themselves, according to reason and the law of charity. We pray for “our daily bread,” that is, all necessaries for our souls and bodies according to our state, and not for superfluities. We ask it only for the present day — “this day,” and not for *to-morrow* — to teach us that we are to recite the prayer every day; and after using our

own endeavors, we should rely on the Providence of God, and not give ourselves too much trouble, uneasiness, or anxiety of mind about *to-morrow*, which we may not live to see, according to these words of our Saviour: "Be not, therefore, solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. (Matt. vi. 34.)"

From this however, it does not follow that we should not make a prudent provision for the future. A farmer who does not plant cannot expect a harvest. We must, therefore, work for our daily bread, every one in his own way, and then God will bless our labor for our daily support.

"*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,*" is the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. In the preceding petition we begged for all the blessings necessary for soul and body. In the three following petitions we ask God to avert from us all evils, past, present and future, whether temporal or spiritual, that may mar our happiness in this world or in that to come. Now, as sin is the greatest of all past evils both as to its guilt and consequences, we ask of God, in this petition, the full and perfect remission of all our past sins. We consequently ask of him the grace of true sorrow for our sins joined to a firm purpose of amendment; for, without a sincere sorrow for the same, we cannot be forgiven. Moreover, in this petition, we ask of God the grace to confess our sins properly in the sacrament of Penance which is the only ordinary means appointed by Jesus Christ to obtain the remission of our sins.

Again, in this petition, we ask of God to forgive not only the eternal punishment deserved by our sins, but also their temporal punishment. We have seen above (Qu. 12.

For whom must we pray?) how necessary it is to ask of God the full remission of the temporal punishment that remains generally due after the eternal punishment has been forgiven, as, on account of it, God may withhold from us many graces necessary for our salvation and sanctification.

However it is not enough to *ask* of God the full remission of the temporal punishment; we must also, at the same time, make use of other means which he has given us to cancel it, such as alms-giving, works of penance, patient endurance of sufferings, the frequent reception of the sacraments, the gaining of indulgences, hearing Mass, etc.

Now, the condition to obtain the full remission of our sins is to forgive all those who have offended us. We ask of God to forgive us as we forgive others. God has promised to forgive us, if we also forgive our fellow-men. "If you forgive men their offences," says our dear Saviour, "your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your sins." (Matt. vi, 14, 15.) One day St John the Almoner wished to induce the king to forgive his enemy and be reconciled to him. To succeed in this difficult task he said Mass in the presence of the king; and after he had recited, in the Mass, the words of the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our trespasses," he all on a sudden stopped praying, but the king continued the Lord's Prayer, saying, "as we forgive those who trespass against us!" Thereupon the saint turned towards the king and said: "O king! what do you tell our Lord in this awful moment? You tell him: As I forgive my fellow-men, so do thou also forgive me." The king was so deeply impressed by these words, that he at once declared himself ready to forgive his enemy and be reconciled to him. (Life of St. John by Leontius, c. 38.)

There lived, during the French Revolution, in 1793, near Evreux, in France, two farmers, Louis and Frederick. They were first cousins. They were of the same family name, had the same age, but were entirely different in character. Frederick was proud, harsh and avaricious. Louis, on the contrary, was honest, frank and moderate. There was at the time a famine in the province. The two farmers had a great quantity of corn. One day Frederick said to Louis: "Cousin, we can grow very rich now if you wish." "Very good," answered Louis, "what shall we do?" "Our barns are full," said Frederick; "all we have to do is to lock them." "What," said Louis; "lock them? that will not make us rich." "We have money enough," answered Frederick; "let us buy all the wheat that comes to market and sell nothing for three months; then we can sell at our own price." "But the poor will starve," said Louis. "No matter," answered Frederick; "what is ours is ours." Louis was shocked at this heartless proposal. "What!" said he; "do you wish me to stain my hands with the blood of the poor, and with the tears of the widow and the orphan? No! never?" "If you will not consent," said Frederick, "I cannot carry out my plan." "No matter," said Louis; "I cannot act against my conscience." "Then I shall never speak to you again," answered Frederick; and he went away, swearing vengeance. Frederick had now vast trenches dug, in which he hid away his corn. He then circulated the rumor that he had sold everything. He now wrote an anonymous letter to the Director of the department, denouncing his cousin Louis as a usurer and oppressor of the poor. "His barns," he said, "are full and the poor are starving; he wishes to make money, etc." In those days death was the punishment of such a crime. Louis was arrested; his corn was confiscated; nothing was left to his

poor wife and children. Louis bore his sorrows in a truly Christian manner. His wife died heart-broken, and his children, abandoned and starving, followed her to the grave. But the justice of God was not slow. Frederick, the perjured calumniator, was himself denounced by the very workmen who had buried his corn. He was cast into prison with his innocent cousin. To go from the prison to the scaffold was then an every day occurrence. One day Frederick's name was called out. He was told to prepare for death. The wretch now cast himself at the feet of his cousin and begged his pardon. "Louis, forgive me," he cried; "I am now going to die. It was I who brought you here. I accused you falsely. I have brought you to misery. I have murdered your wife and children. Forgive me for love of that God before whom I shall soon appear." Louis embraced him. "Yes," said he, "I forgive from my heart. But, Frederick, you shall not die. To-day is the feast of the Ascension, the day when so many captive souls were freed. You, too, shall be set free." "Ah! Louis," cried Frederick, "do not mock me now in my last hour." "No, no!" said Louis; "I do not mock you. My innocence has been proven. In a few hours I shall be set free. You must then take my placé. Answer to my name and I shall answer to yours." "O, my friend," cried Frederick, "my noble cousin! But no! I am a monster, a murderer. I must suffer for my crime." "No, no!" cried Louis; "you must live. You have a wife and children. They love you; they weep for you. My wife, my children are dead. I have nobody on earth now to love me, to weep for me. Farewell!"

The name of Frederick was called; the guard were waiting to lead him to the scaffold. Louis embraced him and tore himself away. On the scaffold Louis did not defend himself. He thanked God for having given him

strength to return good for evil. As Louis' head fell from his bleeding body, a wild shriek was heard; it was Frederick who tried to save his cousin; but it was too late. O, what heroic charity. "No one can have greater charity, than he who sacrifices his life for another," especially for his enemy.

Forgive! Forgive! O, weary never!
 Be kind e'en to the thankless heart.
 If men repay thy love with coldness,
 Show them how nobler far thou art.
 Lo, God sends rain and sunshine mild
 To thankless hearts, blasphemers wild!
 Like him forgive! Be thou his child!

Whate'er thou seest, around, beneath thee,
 This lesson teaches thee: Forgive!
 For hate give love; do good for evil,
 If thou with God on high wilt live!
 The wounded earth yields richest store,
 Bright flashing gems and gleaming ore,
 And smiles with golden grain once more.

The ocean, when its waves are parted,
 Gives forth its pearls so rich and rare;
 The rose when crushed sends forth sweet fragrance,
 Its wounded heart breathes sweetest prayer.
 The bruised grape yields its purple flood
 That soon is changed to Jesu's Blood—
 Ah, learn to love from this sweet Food!

"And lead us not into temptation," is the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. There are two kinds of temptations: There is the temptation of probation or trial, and the temptation of seduction or deceit. The temptation of probation has for its object to test our fidelity and virtue, to give us an experimental knowledge of our weakness and inspire us with sentiments of humility. Of such temptation, God is frequently said, in Holy Writ, to be the author

and direct cause. In this sense he is said to have tempted (tried) Abraham (Gen. xxii.); Job and the Jewish people (Deut. xiii.) In this sense, the Royal prophet prays "try me and tempt me," (Ps. 25); and St. James tells us to regard it as all joy when we fall into divers "*temptations.*" (James i.)

The second kind of temptation is that of seduction or deceit. This sort of temptation has for its object to allure us by the promises of certain pleasures, or to impel us, by the threats of evil and punishment, to the commission of sin and thus to cause the ruin of our soul. Of this, God can never be the direct cause or author. To this sort of temptation St. James has reference when he says: "Let no one say when he is tempted that he is tempted by God. God is not a tempter of evils; he tempts no one." (i. 13.) It is in this sense the devil is called the *tempter*. (Matt. iv.) It is against this temptation of seduction that we pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

But it may be asked, if God cannot be the author of the temptation of seduction, why ask him not to lead us into that into which he *cannot* lead us. Do we not by the very fact of begging him "not to lead us into temptation," imply that he would lead us into such temptation unless we asked him not to do so?

In Holy Scripture, God is frequently said to do what he merely *permits* to happen. Thus, for instance, it is said, "*God delivered up* (the haughty philosophers) *to the desires of their hearts;*" (Rom. v., 24); "*gave them up to shameful passions,*" (v. 26); *delivered them up to a reprobate sense,*" (v. 28). Now, in all this God had no part; he simply permitted those men to follow their passions and sensual appetites, withholding from them, as a punishment of their ingratitude, his lights and graces which are neces-

sary for him who wishes to avoid sin. So also it is said in Holy Writ, "God shall send them the operation of error to believe a lie;" (2 Thess. ii.) that is, "God, by withholding his grace from those who do not believe his ministers, permits them to believe the teachings of the lying spirit as a punishment of their unbelief. So it is here, in the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." The meaning is, do not permit us to yield to seductive temptations, but give us grace to overcome them all. Every day we are exposed to temptations. The world tempts us by bad example. The devil tempts us by impressing our senses and imagination with evil thoughts and desires. Our own passions, our inclination to evil, continually tempt us to sin. If we are not strengthened by God's grace under these temptation, we yield to them and fall; but, if God protects and helps us, we shall overcome them all.

Temptation itself is not a sin. If we do not consent to it, it is an occasion of merit, for God will reward us for our resistance to it.

In praying to God to "lead us not into temptation," we do not pray that God would exempt us entirely from it. That would be to desire a particular favor, which is seldom granted to any one. The greatest saints have been obliged to meet the assaults of temptations. Even our Lord permitted himself to be tempted, that he might teach us the manner of resisting temptations, and obtain for us grace to overcome them. What we ask by the petition is, that we may not be abandoned in our temptations—that in all those with which God may be pleased to afflict us, he may give us help and support, and give us the strength necessary to overcome them.

St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Cæsarea, rather than commit sin, resisted constantly the unjust order of

the emperor Valens, an Arian, and a persecutor of the Catholics. Valens sent the prefect Modestus to Cæsarea, with orders to prevail on Basil, by threats and promises, to communicate with the Arians. The saint being summoned by the prefect, came before him with a cheerful and undaunted countenance. Modestus, assuming a haughty air, said to St. Basil, "What dost thou mean by opposing so great an emperor, whom all obey? Art thou under no apprehension of feeling the effects of the power we are armed with?" "To what does this power extend?" St. Basil replied. Modestus answered: "To confiscation of goods, banishment, tortures, death." "If you can threaten me with anything worse than death, do so; for none of all things give me the least uneasiness," said the saint. "How so?" asked Modestus. "He that has nothing to lose," answered the saint, "is secure against confiscation. I am master of nothing but a few books and the rags I wear, neither of which, I presume, you have any occasion for. As to banishment, I know of no such thing in your power to inflict upon me, who account not the country I now inhabit my own. Heaven is my only country. I as little fear your torments; my emaciated body cannot hold out long under them; the first stroke will despatch me, and put an end both to my life and pain. Much less do I dread death, which I regard as a favor; for it will bring me sooner to my Creator, for whom alone I live." Modestus again said: "Never did any man yet talk at this rate of freedom, and so unconcernedly, to Modestus." "Perhaps," replied Basil, "this is the first time you ever had to do with a bishop. In all other occurrences we bishops are, of all men living, the meekest and most submissive; but where the cause of God and religion is at stake, we overlook all things else, regarding God alone. Your fire, daggers, beasts, and

burning pincers in this cause are our option and delight: you may threaten and torment us, but never can overcome us." The prefect could not but admire the saint's intrepidity; and going out next day to meet the emperor, who was coming into the city, he informed him of what had passed between himself and Basil, and expressed his astonishment at his heroic courage. Modestus afterwards ventured upon a third attack, but was equally unsuccessful, and at last said to the emperor, "We are overcome: this man is above our threats."—*Alban Butler*.

"But deliver us from evil" is the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. When we ask of God to "deliver us from evil," we beg of him to deliver us from the miseries of this life, from the enemies of our souls, and from eternal damnation. By this last petition we beg of God to deliver us from all the evils with which we may be visited in this world—sickness, pain, infirmities, and miseries; poverty, war, famine, plagues, persecutions, and other like scourges, which we suffer in body. However, when we thus pray to be delivered from *bodily* evils, sufferings, and afflictions, it should be conditional, and with resignation to the will of God. This condition is implied in the petition itself, for we beg to be delivered only from what is evil. But there is no true evil but that which puts an obstacle to our salvation. If infirmities, poverties, calamities, are called evils, it is because they are the cause of our repining, discontent, murmuring, and sometimes blasphemy, as we have not sufficient virtue to bear this evil patiently, and with submission to the will of God. We are permitted, indeed, to desire and ask deliverance from these evils, provided we are submissive to the will of God, and disposed to suffer them with submission, if he judge, it useful or necessary to our salvation. In praying thus, we will find the true

remedy of our evils. God will mercifully hear us, and will either deliver us from them, or, what is much better, enable us to bear them.

By this seventh and last petition, we beg to be delivered not only from the evils of the body, but also from the evils of the soul, and particularly that of sin. We beg to be delivered from the enemies of our salvation, from the deceits of the devil, who is the author of all evil, from the punishments due to sin, whether in purgatory or in hell. In fine, we beg of God that he would deliver us from that evil of sin, and particularly that of mortal sin. Sin is the greatest of all evils, or, rather, it is the only real evil. If it be mortal, it kills the soul, it destroys the friendship of God, and brings on us eternal damnation; if it be venial, it lessens the effects of the grace of God, it disposes us for mortal sin, and will hereafter be punished in the flames of purgatory. It is, then, from the evils of sin that we should in particular beg of God to be delivered, when we say, "deliver us from evil." We should pray to be delivered from mortal sin, a hardened heart, final impenitence in this life, and eternal damnation hereafter.

The word "Amen," with which the Lord's Prayer is concluded, is a Hebrew word frequently used by our Saviour, and meaning *so be it*, or *let it be done*; that is, we pray that all we have sued for in the foregoing petitions may be done and granted to us.

Now, if we arrange the meanings of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, in a regular form of prayer, the "Our Father" runs as follows:

"Our Father," most blessed, most holy, our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter.

"Who art in heaven," where thou dwellest with the angels and the saints, whom thou enlightenest and in-

flamest with thy love so that they may know thee; for thou, O Lord, art the life and love that dwell in them; thou art their everlasting happiness, communicating thyself to them; thou art the supreme and eternal source from which all blessings flow, and without thee there is none.

“Hallowed be thy name;” enlighten us with thy divine wisdom, that we may be able to know thee, and to comprehend the boundless extent of thy mercies to us, thy everlasting promises, thy sublime majesty, and thy profound judgments.

“Thy kingdom come,” so that thy grace may reign in our hearts, and prepare us for thy heavenly kingdom, where we shall see thee clearly, and perfectly love thee, rejoicing with thee and in thee through all eternity.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” that being occupied with thee we may love thee with our whole heart, with our whole soul, desiring nothing but thee; with our whole mind, referring all things to thee and ever seeking thy glory in all our actions; with our whole strength, employing all our faculties, both of body and soul, in thy service, applying them to no other end whatsoever than to promote thy kingdom, seeking to draw all men to thee, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, rejoicing at his welfare and happiness as if it were our own, sympathizing with his necessities and giving no offence to him.

“Give us this day our daily bread,” thy dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; we ask him of thee as our daily bread, in order that we may be mindful of the love he testified for us, and of the things he promised, did, and suffered for us; grant us the grace always to keep them in our thoughts, and to value them exceedingly.

“Forgive us our trespasses;” through thy unspeakable mercy, through the merits of the passion and death of

thy most dearly beloved Son, through the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary, and of all the saints. "As we forgive them that trespass against us;" grant us the grace that we may sincerely and truly forgive our enemies, and pray earnestly to thee for them; that we may never return evil for evil, but seek to do good to those who injure us.

"And lead us not into temptation," whether it be concealed, manifest, or sudden, "but deliver us from evil," past, present, and future."

Truly, no man, no angel, only our Lord could give us so simple, and yet so exalted, so celestial a form of prayer, in which we ask all, even more than is asked in the prayers of the largest prayer-book, all the good prayers of which are but paraphrases or expositions of this.

The Lord's Prayer, moreover, accomodates itself to all times and to all persons. It is clear and comprehensible to the unlearned, and yet it contains an inexhaustible source of thought and meditation for the learned. It contains within itself an immeasurable depth, and embraces all the regions of the doctrines of faith and of moral truth. It declares and regulates the highest duties of human life. The Lord's Prayer, therefore, should be the prayer of predilection for every Christian.

Suppose an angel from heaven would come down and leave us a form of prayer, composed for our benefit by the whole heavenly host; with what reverence and love would we not recite such a prayer? But, with how much greater reverence and love still, should we not receive and recite a prayer left us and composed, not by any created intelligence, but by the eternal Son of God himself, "in whom the whole plenitude of the Divinity dwells corporally" (Col. ii. 3.), in whom are concealed all the treasures of wisdom

and of knowledge" (Col. ii, 3.); "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature?" (Col. i. 15.)

St. Margaret of Cortona, after her conversion to God from a very sinful life, recited the Lord's Prayer every day over a thousand times.

When the holy bishop Hugo was on his death-bed, he said the "Our Father," three hundred times in one night; and on being asked what prayers should be suggested to him in his last moments, he answered: "The our Father, the our Father."

The holy Catholic Church holds the Lord's Prayer in so high an esteem that she recites it in every Mass and exhorts the faithful to join together with the priest in offering it up to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught it to us.

CHAPTER VII.

The Angelical Salutation, or, The Hail Mary.

This prayer takes its title from the first words with which it begins. It is also called the *Angelical Salutation*, because the first sentence consists of the words with which the archangel saluted the Blessed Virgin when he came to announce to her that she was to be the Mother of God.

It has been the custom of the faithful from very early times to say the Hail Mary after the Lord's Prayer. They knew that their most powerful patron and advocate with God was his own Mother. No sooner, therefore, had they said the prayer which our Lord taught us than they turned to his mother, in order that she, by her own intercession, might assist them to obtain the graces which they had just asked in the Lord's Prayer.

Another reason why the faithful have been accustomed to recite the Hail Mary after the "our Father," is because it comes next in sublimity as to its origin and meaning.

Origin of the Hail Mary. Whence have we the Hail Mary? Who is its author? The Hail Mary is nothing less than the work of the three divine persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. It was the archangel Gabriel who brought to earth the first words of this prayer; and he came not in his own name, but as the ambassador of the Blessed Trinity, and as a faithful ambassador spoke those words which the Blessed Trinity had dictated to him. The angel entered the modest room of the Blessed Virgin Mary as she knelt in prayer in her humble cottage at Nazareth, and

saluted her reverently, saying, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." He saluted the Blessed Virgin thus in the name of God the Father, who wished to confide to her his divine Son; in the name of God the Son, who wished to choose her for his Mother; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who wished to work in her chaste womb the unutterable mystery of the Incarnation.

The first part, then, of the "Hail Mary" has God himself for its author. The second is also the work of God, for it was inspired by the Holy Ghost. As the Blessed Virgin, some time after the conception of her divine Son, went to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth, at the very sound of her heavenly voice the Saint was, according to Holy Writ, immediately filled with the Holy Ghost, and, inspired by his divine presence, she cried aloud, "O blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

Finally, the last part of the Hail Mary was also composed by the Holy Ghost. In the year 431 the great Council of Ephesus, which represented the entire Catholic Church, condemned the infamous Nestorius, who dared attack at the same time the divinity of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ and the divine maternity of his immaculate Mother. After the Council had condemned the heresiarch, they expressed their heartfelt, their unwavering devotion to the Blessed Mother of God by the short and fervent prayer, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." It was the Church then that composed the last part of the Hail Mary; and the Church, as all Catholics know, is inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost. We can justly say that as the Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of the prophets and apostles, so also does he speak by the mouth of the holy Church; and, consequently, God is also the author of the last part of the Hail Mary.

Now, in explaining the Hail Mary, we are, above all, not to pass over as insignificant those words of the evangelist, "And the name of the virgin was Mary" (Luke i. 28.) For her very name is not without a mystery, and ought to be to us most amiable, sweet, and awful. "Of such virtue and excellency is this name that the heavens exult, the earth rejoices, and the angels sound forth hymns of praise when Mary is named," says St. Bernard. She is truly the star which arose from Jacob, and which being placed above this wide, tempestuous sea, shines forth by the merits and examples of her life. "Oh! you who find yourself tossed in the tempests of this world, turn not your eyes from the brightness of this star if you would not be overwhelmed by storms. If the winds of temptations rise; if you fall among the rocks of tribulations, look up at the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed by the waves of pride, ambition, detraction, jealousy, or envy, look up at the star, call on Mary. If anger, covetousness, or lust beat on the vessel of your soul, look up to Mary. If you begin to sink in the gulf of melancholy and despair, think on Mary. In dangers, in distresses, in perplexities, think on Mary, call on Mary; let her not depart from your lips; let her not depart from your heart; and that you may obtain the suffrage of her prayers, never depart from the example of her conversation. Whilst you follow her, you never go astray; whilst you implore her aid, you never sink in despair; when you think on her, you never wander; under her patronage you never fall; under her protection you need not fear; she being your guide, you are not weary." Such are the sentiments of confidence, devotion, and respect with which the name of Mary ought always to inspire us.

Next to this holy name, the words of the salutation, come to be considered. "Hail" is a word of salutation,

congratulation, and joy. The archangel addressed it with profound reverence and awe to this incomparable and glorious virgin. It was anciently an extraordinary thing if an angel appeared to one of the patriarchs or prophets, and then he was received with great veneration and honor, being by nature and grace exalted above them; but when the Archangel Gabriel visited Mary, he was struck at her exalted dignity and pre-eminence, and approached and saluted her with admiration and respect. He was accustomed to the lustre of the highest heavenly bodies, but was amazed and dazzled at the dignity and spiritual glory of her whom he came to salute Mother of God, whilst the attention of the whole heavenly court was fixed with ravishment upon her. With what humility ought we, worms of the earth and base sinners, to address her in the same salutation. The devout Thomas à Kempis gives the following paraphrase of the Angelic Salutation; "With awe, reverence, devotion, and humble confidence do I suppliantly approach you, bearing on my lips the salutation of the angel, humbly to offer you. I joyfully present it to you, with my head bowed out of reverence to your sacred person, and with my arms expanded through excessive affection of devotion; and I beg the same may be repeated by all the heavenly spirits for me a hundred thousand times and much oftener; for I know not what I can bring more worthy your transcendent greatness, or more sweet to us who recite it. Let the pious lover of your holy name listen and attend. The heavens rejoice, and all the earth ought to stand amazed when I say 'Hail Mary.' Satan and hell tremble when I repeat 'Hail Mary.' Sorrow is banished, and a new joy fills my soul when I say 'Hail Mary.' My languid affection is strengthened in God and my soul is refreshed when I repeat 'Hail Mary.' So great is the

sweetness of this blessed salutation that it is not to be expressed in words, but remains deeper in the heart than can be fathomed. Wherefore, again I most humbly bend my knees to you, O most holy Virgin, and say: 'Hail Mary, full of grace.' Oh! that, to satisfy my desire of honoring and saluting you with all the powers of my soul, all my members were converted into tongues and into voices of fire, that I might glorify you, O mother of God, without ceasing! And now, prostrate in your presence, invited by sincere devotion of heart, and all inflamed with veneration for your sweet name, I represent to you the joy of that salutation when the Archangel Gabriel, sent by God, entered your secret closet, and honored you with a salutation unheard from the beginning of the world, saying: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee'; which I desire to repeat, were it possible, with lips pure as gold, and with a burning affection, and I desire that all creatures now say with me, *Hail.*"

In the like sentiments of profound respect and congratulation with the angel, we style her *full of grace*. Though she is descended of the royal blood of David, her illustrious pre-eminence is not derived from her birth or any other temporal advantages, but from that prerogative in which alone true excellency consists, the grace of God, in which she surpasses all other mere creatures. To others, God deals out portions of his grace according to an inferior measure; but Mary was to be prepared to become mother of the Author of grace. To her, therefore, God gave every grace and every virtue in an eminent degree of excellency and perfection. "Mary was filled with grace, for the ocean of the Holy Ghost was poured upon her" says venerable Bede. (In Matt. c. i.) We firmly believe that, on account of the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin

had the inestimable grace and privilege to be conceived without original sin. By special grace she also remained free from actual sin in the course of her whole life. When God forms particular designs with regard to our present or future state, he always grants gifts and graces in proportion to the mission and duties for which he has destined us. "God hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament, not in the letter, but in the spirit." (2 Cor. iii. 6.)

Now, as God had predestined the Blessed Virgin Mary for the glory of divine maternity, he would not let her fall into sin or culpable ignorance. The divine Word, the eternal wisdom of God, was to dwell in the body and soul of holy Mary; but the Holy Ghost says, "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins." (Wis. 4.) It must, then, be admitted by all Christians that she never committed actual sin, and that the words of the Canticle were realized, in her lovely, faultless person. "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot or stain in thee." (iv. 7.)

She had no propensity to any kind of sin or evil, which in us is the natural consequence of original sin. The prophet Ezechiel says (Chapt. 43, 2): "Behold the glory of the God of Israel came in by the way of the East," which means the mother of the Son of God; "and the earth shone with his majesty," which intimates the Saviour of the world. Her body and soul were in a state of perfect sanctity, as Adam was at the moment of his creation. On the glorious day of her conception, God shed brilliant rays of light, grace and sanctity upon her, which shone with splendor and glory all her life and was the visible result of her immaculate conception.

She received a greater abundance of grace and sanctity than all the rest of the human race; for the nearer one ap-

proaches to the service and principle of all glory, the more plentifully he shares in its effects. Those angels who are the nearest to the throne of God, receive more light, joy and happiness than all the rest of the celestial hierarchy. "But grace and truth come to us by Jesus Christ." (John i, 17.) His divinity is the source of grace, and his humanity the powerful instrument which infuses it into holy souls. The prophet Jeremias and John the Baptist were sanctified in their mother's womb; but they had not the same fulness of grace and sanctity as the Blessed Virgin Mary had from the Divinity and Humanity of the Saviour of the world.

The Blessed Virgin Mary preserved her virginity in her conception.

The prophet Isaias says (vii. 14.): "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."

Could it be possibly consistent with the infinite power and glory of the eternal Father to share with man the divine paternity of Jesus Christ? The eternal Word of God assumed human nature in the pure womb of the virgin Mary, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost; for this supernatural privilege was suitable to the dignity and majesty of Christ's humanity, to be conceived without stain or sin, whereas it is by it the sins of the world were to be effaced according to the words of St. John (i, 29.): "Behold the Lamb of God: behold him who taketh away the sins of the world."

In fine, he came to make us the children of God by a spiritual generation, not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by the will and power of God.

Our Saviour, says St. Augustine, was, according to the flesh, to be born of a virgin, in order to teach us by that great miracle that his members were, according to the

spirit, to be born again of another virgin, — the holy Church.

St. Joseph was supposed to be his father, according to the general opinion of the Jews; not that he was so in reality. The evangelist, in relating the temporal genealogy of the Saviour, mentions only Joseph's ancestors; for he conformed thereby to the custom of the Jews who were accustomed to trace a man's genealogy from his paternal ancestors; but this comprised also that of holy Mary, for they were both of the same tribe.

The Blessed Virgin Mary preserved her virginity at the birth of our Saviour? "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son." This passage evidently proves that her conception and delivery caused no change in the supernatural state of her virginity.

Our word is conceived not only in our intellective faculty, but it also thence comes forth by an intelligible expression without any diminution in our intellectual powers. In like manner the Word incarnate came forth from the womb of holy Mary without affecting in the slightest degree her virginity.

As he was conceived in a supernatural manner, he was not subject to the ordinary course of nature; but at the moment of his birth, he miraculously came forth into the hands of his virgin mother as a beautiful flower on its stem, and holy Mary prostrated herself in profound adoration before him. "The lily of virginity shall bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with great joy and praise: and all nations shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God." (Isai. xxxv. 2.) He came forth from the virgin Mary's womb without causing her the slightest pang or trouble, as he afterwards did from the sepulchre without breaking the seals that confined him and entered the room, where the disciples were assembled, with the doors locked.

The Son of God came to destroy sin and efface every moral stain thereof from the soul of man. Could it, then, be supposed that he would have begun the glorious work of human redemption in causing any stain or blemish to the honor and glory of his mother? He came to inculcate the divine maxims of the Gospel on the minds and hearts of children and told them to respect and honor their parents. Would his doctrine have produced any salutary effect if, at his birth, he had lessened the dignity and glory of his mother's virginity? So, to prove to the world that he assumed our nature in human form, he seemed to be born of a woman; but to manifest his Divinity, he was born of a virgin.

Here it may be asked: If the Blessed Mother of God always remained a virgin why was she espoused to St. Joseph? Had Jesus Christ been born of an unmarried mother, Herod and the Jews would have assigned the illegitimacy of his birth as a plausible reason of their contempt and hatred of him; but holy Mary's espousal deprived them of that pretext of scandal and persecution.

Jesus Christ was to be born of an espoused virgin for several reasons. The principal reasons were, (1) to conceal his birth from the fury of the demon; (2) to secure him from public disgrace; (3) to be the figure of the Church, which, though a virgin, has been espoused to him in the mystery of the Incarnation. Holy Mary consented to her espousal to secure her divine Son from infamy, in giving him St. Joseph as his reputed father, who had the joy and glory to rear the Infant Jesus and to be called his foster-father. St. Joseph also protected holy Mary from dishonor and a shameful death, for the Jews would undoubtedly have accused her of misconduct and stoned her to death according to their law, because single women were

condemned to the same punishment as married women whenever they became guilty of immoral conduct.

In a word, in this wonderful espousal we find several precious lessons for the world; for the conduct of St. Joseph silences the incredulous and impious who would deny that holy Mary in her conception and delivery had remained a virgin. Her admirable conduct is also a condemnation of all young persons who imprudently expose their honor, virtue and reputation.

In fine this holy espousal condemns those heretics who object to virginity, and those who oppose marriage. It is also piously believed that the Blessed Virgin Mary, to enhance the merit of her actions and increase the grace of God, made a vow of perpetual virginity.

What one does with the obligation of a vow is more meritorious and more acceptable to God, for it intimates a good disposition to virtue and sanctity of life. As Holy Mary wished to merit the grace and favor of God, it is more than probable that she enhanced the merit thereof by a vow of virginity; and general tradition proves that she made it even in her infancy.

There is no doubt that it was only conditional at that period of her life; for virginity was forbidden by the Jewish law; but as God had made known to her by divine inspiration that that vow was agreeable to him, it became absolute even before the Annunciation. All this is clear from holy Mary's answer to the angel Gabriel in these words: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (Luke i. 34.)

In the words "the Lord is with thee" we repeat with the angel another eulogium, consequent of the former. God, by his immensity or omnipotence, is with all creatures, because in him all creatures have their being. He is much

more intimately with all his just, inasmuch as he dwells in them by his grace, and manifests in them the most gracious effects of his goodness and power; but the Blessed Virgin, being full of grace and most agreeable in his eyes above all other mere creatures, having also the closest union with Christ as his Mother, and burning with more than seraphic love, she is his most beloved tabernacle, and he favors her with the special effects of his extraordinary presence, displaying in her his boundless munificence, power and love.

The following praise was given to her in the same words both by the Archangel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Mary is truly called blessed above all other women, she having been herself always preserved from the least stain of sin, and having been the happy instrument of God in converting the maledictions laid on all mankind into blessings. When Judith had delivered Bethulia from temporal destruction, Ozias, the prince of the people, said to her: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, above all women upon the face of the earth." (Judith xiii. 23.) And "the people all blessed her with one voice, saying: 'Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people.'" How much more emphatically shall we, from our hearts, pronounce her blessed above all women who brought forth Him who is the author of all manner of spiritual and eternal blessings to us. She most justly said herself, in the deepest sense of gratitude to the divine goodness, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (Luke i. 48.)

By bestowing these praises on Mary, we offer principally to God a profound homage of praise for the great mystery of the Incarnation. The pious woman mentioned

in the Gospel who, upon hearing the divine doctrine of our Redeemer, cried out with admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and blessed are the breasts which gave thee suck," (Luke xi. 27.) meant chiefly to commend the Son. In like manner, the praises we address to Mary in the Angelical Salutation are reflected in the first place on her divine Son, from whom and by whom alone she is entitled to them; for it is for his gifts and graces and for his sake that we praise and honor her. On this account, this prayer is chiefly an excellent doxology for the great mystery of the Incarnation. Whence, having styled the Mother blessed above all women, we pronounce the Son infinitely more blessed, saying: "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb." He is the source and author of all her graces and blessings; she derives them only from him; and to him we refer whatever we admire and praise in her. Therefore, in an infinitely higher sense of praise, love, and honor, and in a manner infinitely superior to her, we call him blessed for ever by God, angels, and men: by God, as his well-beloved Son, and in his divinity co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; by the angels, as the author of their being, grace, and glory, inasmuch as he is their God; by men, in his Incarnation, as the repairer of their losses and their Redeemer. We, considering attentively the infinite evils from which he has delivered us, the pains and labors which he sustained for us, the ransom which he has paid with his precious blood to redeem us, the everlasting and infinite advantages which he has purchased for us, with the boundless felicity of heaven, the excess of his goodness, love, and mercy, and his infinite majesty and perfections—we, I say, bearing all this in mind, ought, in a spirit of love and praise ever to call her blessed through whom we receive so great a Saviour; but him infinitely more blessed, both for his own

adorable sanctity and for all the graces of which he is the source.

The most holy and glorious name of Jesus, which is added to this doxology, is a name of unspeakable sweetness and grace — a name most comfortable and delightful to every loving soul, terrible to the wicked spirits, and adorable with respect to all creatures, so that at its very sound every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell shall bend, and every creature be filled with religious awe and profound veneration and respect.

The last part of this prayer is a supplication. The prayer of the blessed spirits in heaven consists chiefly in acts of adoration, love, praise, thanksgiving, and the like. We, in this vale of tears and miseries, join sighs even to our hymns of praise and adoration. So extreme are our spiritual wants and trials, that we never present ourselves in prayer before Almighty God without imploring his mercy and graces with the greatest earnestness possible and the deepest sense of our needs. It is in this sincere feeling of our necessities and the most humble and earnest cry of our heart that the fervor and very soul of our prayer consist. God knows, and with infinite tenderness compassionates, the depth of our wounds and the whole extent of our numberless and boundless spiritual miseries. But our insensibility under them provokes his just indignation. He will have us sincerely to feel and to acknowledge the weight of our evils; our extreme spiritual poverty and total insufficiency, the baseness of our guilt, the rigor of his judgments, the frightful torments of an unhappy eternity which we deserve for our sins, and the dangers from ourselves and the invisible enemies with which we are surrounded. He requires that we confess the abyss of miseries in which we are sunk, and out of it raise

our voice to him with tears and groans, owning our total dependence on his infinite mercy and goodness. If a beggar ask an alms of us, his wants make him eloquent, he sums them all up to move us to compassion; sickness, pains, hunger, anguish of mind, distress of a whole family, and whatever else can set off his miseries in the most moving manner. In like manner, when we pray we must feel and lay open before our heavenly Father our deep wounds, our universal indigence, inability, and weakness, and with all possible earnestness implore his merciful aid. We must beg that God himself will be pleased to form in our hearts and sustain such sincere desires, that he inspire us with a deep sense of our wretchedness, and teach us to lay this before him in such a manner as will most powerfully move him to pity and relieve us.

We have recourse to the angels and saints to beg their joint intercession for us. For this we address ourselves in the first place to the Blessed Virgin, as the refuge of the afflicted and of sinners. In this prayer we repeat her holy name to excite ourselves to reverence and devotion. By calling her Mother of God we express her most exalted dignity, and stir up our confidence in her patronage. For what cannot she obtain for us of God, who was pleased to be born of her! We at the same time remember that she is also spiritually *our Mother*; for, by adoption, we are brothers and co-heirs of Christ. She is to us a mother of more than maternal tenderness; incomparably more sensible of our poverty and weakness, and more ready to procure us all mercy and assistance, than mothers according to the flesh can be, as in charity she surpasses all other mere creatures. But to call her mother, and to deserve her compassion, we must sincerely renounce and put an end to our disorders, by which we have too often trampled upon the blood of her Son.

These words, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," are a kind of preface to our petition, in which we humbly entreat her to pray for us. We do not ask her to *give* us grace; we know this to be the most precious gift of God, who alone can bestow it on us. We only desire her to *ask* it for us of her Son, and to join her powerful intercession with our unworthy prayers. We mention our quality of sinners to humble ourselves in the deepest sentiments of compunction, and to excite her compassion by laying our extreme miseries and wants before her, which this epithet of sinners expresses beyond what any created understanding can fathom. Mary, from her fuller and more distinct knowledge of the evil of sin, and the spiritual needs of a soul infested with it, forms a much clearer and more exact idea of the abyss of our evils than we can possibly do; and, in proportion to them and to the measure of her charity, is moved to compassionate us under them. But we must mention our sins with sincere sentiments of contrition and regret; for the will which still adheres to sin provokes indignation, not compassion, in God and in all the saints, who love his sanctity and justice above all things. We must, therefore, mention our guilt with the most profound sentiments of confusion and compunction. In proportion to their sincerity and fervor, we shall excite the pity and mercy of God and the tender compassion of his Mother. Mary, having borne in her womb the Author of grace and mercy, has put on the bowels of the most tender compassion for sinners. By this mention of our quality of sinners, we sufficiently express what it is that we beg of God—namely, the grace of a sincere repentance, the remission of all our sins, and strength to resist all temptations to sin. We ask also for all graces and virtues, especially that of divine charity. All this is sufficiently understood by the very

nature of our request without being expressed: for what else ought we to ask of God through the intercession of her who is the Mother of the Author of grace? We beg this abundance of all graces, both *at present*, because we stand in need of it every moment of our lives, and for the hour of our death, that great and most dreadful moment, which must be a principal object in all our prayers. The whole life of a Christian ought to be nothing else than a constant preparation for that tremendous hour which will decide our eternal lot, and in which the devil will assail us with the utmost effort of his fury; and our own weakness in mind and body, the lively remembrance of our past sins, and other alarming circumstances and difficulties, will make us stand in need of the strongest assistance of divine grace and the special patronage of her who is the protectress of all in distress, particularly of her devout clients in their last and most dangerous conflict.

Amen, or, *so be it*, expresses an earnest repetition of our supplication and praise. As the heart, in the ardor of its affections, easily goes far beyond what words can express, so neither is it confined by them in the extent and variety of its acts. In one word it often comprises perfect acts of faith, hope and charity, adoration, praise, and other such virtues. Thus, by *amen* it repeats with ardor all the petitions and acts of the Lord's Prayer and Angelical Salutation. Some devout persons have made this short but energetic and comprehensive word one of their most frequent aspirations to God during the course of the day—meaning thereby to assent to, confirm, and repeat, with all possible ardor and humility, all the hymns and perfect acts of profound adoration, humility, love, praise, zeal, thanksgiving, oblation of themselves, total resignation, confidence in God, and all other virtues, which all the

heavenly spirits offer to God, with all their power and strength, and with the utmost purity of affection, without intermission to eternity. In these acts we join by the word *Amen*, and desire to repeat them all with infinite fervor, were it possible, forever; and with them we join the most sincere sentiments and acts of compunction and a particular humility, condemning ourselves as infinitely unworthy to join the heavenly choirs or faithful servants of God in offering him a tribute of praise; most unworthy even to pronounce his most holy name or mention any of his adorable perfections, which defiled lips and faint, divided affections rather profane and depreciate than praise and honor.

Such are the sentiments of faith, hope, charity, gratitude, humility, and sorrow which we express in reciting the Hail Mary; such are the graces and favors which we ask in the few words of which the Hail Mary is composed. Were we to say the prayers of all prayer-books we could not express deeper sentiments of religion than we do in the Hail Mary, nor ask for greater favors than we pray for in the Angelic Salutation. No wonder, therefore, that all good Christians always delighted in repeating most frequently the Our Father and the Hail Mary. From these heavenly prayers they drew greater delight, strength, and courage, greater sentiments of religion than from all other prayers, even the most excellent.

How are we to prepare for a happy death ?

1) By leading a good life ; 2) by performing many good works ; 3) by being charitable to the poor ; 4) by being devout to the Blessed Virgin ; 5) by praying often for the grace of a happy death.

There are many nowadays who view death merely as a

dissolution of organs, the decomposition of a worn-out machine, as an extinction of the powers of life; in other words, they examine it simply with the eye of an infidel physician. It is not strange at all that these people should be insensible to the high moral grandeur which so often distinguishes the closing scene of mortal life, or that they should be surprised or offended at the importance which religion ascribes to this last act in the combat of her children. But far is it from the humble followers of a crucified Saviour to profess a scorn for death, which he himself condescended to endure. Death is disarmed, it is true; it is vanquished; yet its aspect still bespeaks its origin, and the eye naturally turns from it in mourning. "Perhaps you do not know," says St. Leonard, "what sort of a grace it is to die a happy death. It is a grace so great that the saints never thought it was their due for anything they had done for God. Even if God had denied a happy death to his own Mother, he would have done her no wrong; for it is a grace so great that no one can merit it. Though all angels and men should unite in efforts to give us a just knowledge of the importance of a good or bad death, it would be impossible for them to do so, because they themselves cannot adequately comprehend the good or evil resulting from a good or bad death."

Death is the end of all our works, of our earthly pilgrimage; the harbor where we cast anchor, or are wrecked for ever. On death depends eternity; eternal happiness or eternal misery is its necessary result. If we die well, we shall be saved eternally; if we die ill, we shall be eternally lost. We can die but once. Hence the infinite importance of this final act of our life. The day of death is the master day—the day that judges all the other days of our life. It is for this reason that this crisis naturally impresses

every one with a feeling of awe. The pinched and pallid features, the cold and clammy skin, the laborious heaving, the rattling respiration, and the irresistible force of that disease which no earthly remedies can overcome speak of something appalling, and suggest the idea of an almighty power manifesting displeasure and inflicting punishment.

What especially increases the sufferings of the dying is their remorse for sin committed, their dread of the approaching judgment, and the uncertainty of eternal salvation. At that moment especially the devil puts forth all his power to gain the soul that is passing into eternity, knowing that the time is short in which he may win it and that if he lose it then he has lost it for ever. For this reason it is that the devil, who has always tempted us in life, will not be satisfied to tempt us alone in death, but calls companions to his aid. When any one is at the point of death, his house is filled with demons, who unite to accomplish his ruin. It is related of St. Andrew Avellino that, at the time of his death, several hundred devils came to tempt him; and we read that, at the time of his agony, he had so fierce a struggle with hell as to cause all his good brethren in religion who were present to tremble.

Now, the path which we are pursuing leads us necessarily within view of death. This angel of destruction gains upon us more and more every day, and he comes upon many too often unawares. Happy are those who are always prepared to follow his summons. He has two keys in his hand; with the one he opens heaven for the good, and with the other he opens the gates of hell for the bad. The greatest gain, therefore, in this life is to prepare ourselves every day for a happy death.

Now, one of the means to prepare for a happy death is to *lead a good life.*

When you are dying you will see a picture. It will be a picture of your life. Your death will just be like your life. Your death will be a picture of your life. If you have led a good life, your death will be a good death. If you have led a bad life, your death will be a bad death. *As people live, so they die.* Almighty God says so. (Psalm cxv.) *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints.* (Psalm xxxiii.)

Why is it that we can look on so calmly when an innocent child dies? A certain feeling of regret even comes over us. Ah! would to God, we had died when we were pure and innocent as this child, before sin and its bitter fruit had poisoned our heart!

Why does the corpse of an innocent child inspire no terror? Why do we dress the dead child in white and adorn its little grave with flowers? It is because to the pure of heart death has no terror; it comes to the pure soul like an angel crowned with flowers to tell it that the bridegroom calls; that the marriage-feast is ready. If we were without sin, how easy would death be! Then we would not shudder with strange terror when the crucifix is placed in our cold hands and the blessed candle is lighted and the prayers for the dying are recited near our bed-side! Then we would sink to sleep in the arms of God like a child slumbering on the warm, loving breast of its mother! How calm, how peaceful is the death of those who have led a life of innocence and penance. They bless God, as they look back upon all the trials and sorrows generously borne for love of him. Their trials and sufferings are soon over. The eternal reward awaits them. They rejoice because all temptation and danger of sinning shall soon end, and eternal happiness shall be theirs.

When the Blessed Mary of Oignies was about to die,

her soul was filled with such heavenly joy that she could no longer contain it within her breast. She burst forth into a melodious hymn of praise and gladness. For three days and three nights she continued to sing, and her voice only grew louder and stronger as she drew near her end, and it was sweet and clear as the voice of an angel. She continued thus to sing until her pure soul went forth to join in the melodious choirs of the blessed in heaven. Thus died this holy virgin, and thus, too, have thousands died who served God in holiness of life.

The second means to die a happy death is *to perform many good works.*

In the time of the Autumn, a farmer sowed seed in his field. In the Winter when there was frost and snow nobody could see the seeds, because they were under the ground covered up. Early in the Spring the sun became warmer, and the snow melted away. Then a great many beautiful little green stalks came up out of the ground. At first you could see only their little green heads. As the weather grew warmer the green stalks grew higher. Then came the hot sunshine of the Summer. The stalks were grown very high, and the color was changed from green to yellow, almost like gold. On the top of each stalk there were many fine little yellow grains of wheat. One day the farmer came with a sharp sickle and cut down the wheat, and filled his barn with it.

You must do what the farmer did. You must sow seed. But what kind of seed must you sow? You must sow the seed of a happy death. (Gal. vi.) "For what things a man soweth, the same also shall he reap." Every time you do a good work you sow the seed of a happy death. Every time you say your prayers, or hear holy mass, or say, *my Jesus I do all for thee*, or keep out of bad company, you are

sowing the seed of a happy death. St. Augustine says, "that a person cannot die a bad death who has lived a good life."

The third means to die a happy death is *to be charitable to the poor*.

God has said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*"—(Matthew v.) *Judgment without mercy on him that hath not done mercy.*" (James ii.) It is not often that a person who has been wicked all his life, is converted, when he is dying. But if ever a wicked man dies a happy death, we almost always find that he has been *kind and good to the poor* during his life-time.

One day St. Francis was going along the road. He was very poor. His clothes were so poor that scarcely any one would have worn them. It happened as he went along that a soldier met him. The soldier was very wicked. However, when he saw St. Francis so poor, he felt pity for him. He took some money, perhaps all he had, and put it in the hand of St. Francis. It was well for the wicked soldier that he did this little work of mercy, for it saved his soul. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy from God." As soon as the soldier had done this work of mercy, God sent a light down from heaven, into the soul of St. Francis. By that light St. Francis saw that in three days the soldier would be dead. So he said to the soldier: "My good man, I would advise you to repent of your sins, and to go to confession. You have but a short time to live, and in three days you will not be alive." When the soldier heard that his death was so near, he lost no time. He did his best to get ready for death. He repented of his sins, and went to confession, and received the priest's absolution. In three days the soldier died as St. Francis had foretold. So the reward of that little work of mercy was conversion and a happy preparation for death.

In the lives of the fathers of the desert we find something which shows that it is well even for the greatest sinners to be good to the poor.

A priest called Timothy went to visit a holy monk called St. Pemen. Amongst other things he asked St. Pemen what he thought about a woman living in Egypt, who was very wicked. But although she was so wicked, she was always very good to the poor. She even gave them the money she got by committing sin. St. Pemen answered, "I am sure that woman will be converted before she dies, because she is so good to the poor." Sometime afterwards St. Pemen happened to hear about the wicked woman again. He was told that she committed sin as much as ever. But still she was always good to the poor. Again St. Pemen said: "I am sure that woman will be converted before she dies, because she is so good to the poor." After some time this woman sent a message to St. Pemen to ask him to pray for her. St. Pemen prayed for her. Then he went himself to this wicked woman. He spoke to her about her bad life. When she had heard what he said, she began to cry for her sins, and said: "I will change my bad life, and serve God alone." She then went into a convent, where she did great penances for her sins, and for the rest of her days she led a most holy life.

There was a great saint called St. Vincent of Paul. He was very often with people when they were dying, and he knew very well how dying people feel. St. Vincent of Paul says, "that when those are dying who have been very good to the poor, God gives them, on their death-bed, a particular hope that they will go to heaven." St. Jerome was one of the most learned men who ever lived. He says this: "I do not remember reading of any one dying a bad death who had done many works of mercy to others.

For he has many to pray for him. It is impossible for the prayers of many not to be heard."

Know this, that being good to the poor that makes us find life everlasting. (Job. xii.) But mercy goes away from the death-bed of those who have not been merciful to others.

The fourth means to die a happy death is, *to be devout to the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

St. Bridget had a son who was called Charles. When he was a boy he enlisted and became a soldier. He did not live long. He died while he was still a soldier. When St. Bridget heard that Charles was dead, while he was still a soldier, she felt very anxious about him. She feared that perhaps he had lost his soul. However, as soon as the news came she began to pray for him. While she was praying she saw Jesus Christ himself. He spoke to her about Charles. He said that Charles had been wicked and that he deserved to die a bad death, but that he had not died a bad death, and that his soul was saved. St. Bridget wondered how it could be that his soul was saved, when he had led a bad life. Jesus told her how this happened. He said, "although Charles was wicked, still there was one very good thing he did: he loved my dear mother Mary, and he often prayed to her. So when he was dying, my mother prayed to me for him, that he might repent and not go to hell. Now I never refuse anything that my mother asks of me. So I gave Charles the grace to repent. When he was dying he sincerely wished to change his life, and made a good act of contrition, and was saved."

St. Bridget afterwards saw the devil complaining to Jesus Christ about the Blessed Virgin. The devil said that the Blessed Virgin would not allow him to tempt Charles when he was dying, and that when Charles went to be

judged, Mary went along with him to take care of him. Then St. Bridget saw that Jesus Christ sent away the devil in great shame, and took the soul of Charles with him into heaven.

There is nothing the devil hates so much as devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He tempted the blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez with bad thoughts. He troubled him very much. One day he said to him, "If you will leave off your devotion to the Blessed Virgin, I will leave off troubling you with bad thoughts."

The least little thing you do for Mary brings a blessing upon you.

St. Teresa gives an account of a merchant who lived at Valladolid in Spain. He did not live as a good Christian should live. However, he had some devotion to the Blessed Virgin. A little later it will be seen that this was a very happy thing for him.

St. Teresa came to the town where the merchant was living. She wanted to find a house for her nuns. The merchant heard that St. Teresa was seeking a house. So he went to her, and offered to give her a house which belonged to him. He said he would give the house *in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. St. Teresa thanked him, and took the house. Two months after this, the gentleman suddenly became very ill. He was not able to speak, or make his confession. However, he showed by signs that he wished to beg pardon of our Lord for his sins. He died soon after. "After his death," St. Teresa says, "I saw our Lord. He told me that this gentleman had been very near losing his soul. But he had mercy on him when he was dying, on account of the service he did to his blessed mother, by giving the house in her honor." "I was glad," says St. Teresa, "that his soul was saved. For I was very much afraid it

would have been lost on account of his bad life." Our Lord told St. Teresa to have the house finished as soon as possible, because the soul was suffering great torments in purgatory, and would not come out of it till the convent was finished and the first mass said there. When the first mass was said, St. Teresa went to the rails of the altar to receive holy communion. At the moment she knelt down she saw the gentleman standing by the side of the Priest. His face was shining with light and joy. His hands were joined together. He thanked St. Teresa very much for delivering his soul from the fire of purgatory. St. Teresa then saw him go up into heaven. We see from this history, says St. Teresa, how great is the value of the smallest service done to the Blessed Virgin, and how much it pleases her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Anselm, who lived about seven hundred years since; says — "It is impossible for any one to save his soul, who is not devout to the Blessèd Virgin, and protected by her." St. Alphonsus, one of the latest saints, says — "it is impossible for any one who is faithful in honoring the Blessed Virgin, and recommending himself to her, to lose his soul — if he has a sincere desire to amend his life."

Practices in honor of the Blessed Virgin for a happy death

1. Be sure to say the Hail Mary, at least every day, in your morning and night prayers. When you come to those words, *pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*, be sure always to pray for a happy death.

2. Every day try to say the rosary, or at least one decade of it.

3. Make a visit every day to her altar or picture. Kneel down before it, and say the Hail Mary.

4. Be very devout to her, on her festivals. The great

festivals of the Blessed Virgin are: 1. Her Purification, 2d February. 2. The feast of the Seven Dolors, on the Friday of Passion Week. 3. The festival of her Annunciation, on the 25th of March, when she became the Mother of God. 4. The festival of her Scapular of Mount Carmel, on 16th July. 5. The festival of her Assumption, when she went to heaven, on 15th August. 6. The festival of her birth-day, 8th September. 7. The festival of her Presentation, when she was offered to Almighty God, 21st November. 8. The festival of her Immaculate Conception, 8th December.

5. You can have a picture or image of the Blessed Virgin in your house. If you can, put flowers before it, or keep a lamp burning there.

6. Be a member of a Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin.

7. Wear the Scapular of Mount Carmel in her honor.

8. Bow your head when you hear her name, *which all generations shall call Blessed.* (Luke ii.)

9. Be devout to St. Joseph for her sake.

10. After your night prayers, you can say the following prayer to the Blessed Virgin for a happy death — *O my dear Mother Mary, by the love you have for Almighty God, I beg of you to help me at all times, especially at the terrible moment of death. Never leave me till you see me safe in heaven, blessing you and singing your mercies forever. So I hope. So may it be. Amen.*

Wear the Holy Scapular of Mount Carmel, the Brown Scapular. — In the year 1246, on the 16th July, the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Simon Stock, a Carmelite monk, living in the county of Kent, in England. She brought with her a brown Scapular, and invested him with it. She then spoke these words: “He who dies with this Scapular will not go into the flames of Hell. This Scapular is a sign of salvation and safety in dangers.”

You should wear this holy Scapular in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. You honor her because she is the Mother of Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever.

You would like to know what is meant by these words, "He who dies wearing this Scapular, will not go into the flames of hell," said by our Blessed Lady to St. Simon Stock. You will understand what is meant, when you hear about the man who was drowned. This man must have either been very wicked, or lost his senses. One day he was walking along close to the river, his foot slipped, and he fell into the water. Some one who was near him stretched out his hand, and pulled him out of the water. The moment the man was out of the water he wilfully turned round and jumped back into the water. He was drowned.

Now you may understand about the Scapular. The Blessed Virgin is most kind and good to those who wear it. She obtains from God many helps and graces for them, to save them from hell. If they go to hell, when they could easily keep out of it, they must be as stupid and wicked as the man who was drowned in the water, when he might so easily have saved himself.

Some years since, there was a very wicked man living in Belgium. Still he wore the Scapular. He was taken ill. He grew worse. His last agony came on him. The doctor expected him to die every moment. Still he did not die. He remained alive for two or three days, although it was thought that every moment would be his last. The doctor who was by his bed-side, told him that he wondered to see him remain alive so long. The man said: "I understand it. I can tell you how it is. I wear the Scapular. I feel that as long as I have it on, the Blessed Virgin, by her prayers, keeps me alive, that I may repent. If I were

to take it off, she would no longer pray for me, and I should die. But I do not want to repent. I will die as I have lived. What I have said is true. You will see it. The moment I take off the Scapular, I shall die." He then lifted up his hand and took the Scapular off his neck, and at that moment — he died!

The fifth means to die a happy death is *to pray often for the grace of a happy death.*

St. Augustine says; "The grace of a happy death is given to those who pray for it."

A priest was once travelling in Scotland. No one could tell that he was a priest. It happened one day that as he was on his journey, he passed by a house that stood alone in the country. At the moment when he was passing the door, a person came out of the house and asked him if he would come in. The priest did not wish to stop. So he asked what was the matter, why did they wish him to come in. The person at the door answered, that the old man of the house was dying. But the old man would not believe that he was dying, although the doctor and every one had told him that he was dying. The priest then went into the house, and walked up stairs into the room where the old man was. The priest looked at the old man, and saw that he was certainly dying; so he spoke to the old man. "My good man," he said, "be ready for death; you are certainly dying." "Oh no," answered the old man, "I am sure I shall not die *now.*" "But," said the priest, "many deceive themselves about death. They die when they do not think that they are dying. Believe me, for I have seen many die." "No," answered the old man. "I am quite sure that I shall not die *now.*" "Tell me," said the priest, "What makes you think so?" "I will tell you the truth," said the old man, "I do not know who you are, but I am

a Catholic. For thirty years I have prayed every day to God, that when I die, a priest might come to hear my confession. But there is no priest in this part of the country. After praying to God for thirty years not to die without a priest, God makes me feel sure that I shall not die till a priest comes here." "What you say," said the priest," is true. If you have prayed to God every day for thirty years not to die without a priest, it is not likely that God will let you die without a priest. I am happy to be able to tell you that a priest is here now, I am a priest." Great was the joy of the old man, and many tears did he shed. Well might he say with the good old Simeon, (Luke ii.), *Now, O Lord, thou dost dismiss thy servant according to thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen thy salvation.* The old man then made his confession, received the holy sacraments, and died a very happy death. Perhaps you might say, that it was only by chance that the priest passed the house just when the old man was dying. It is true the priest did not go that way to help the dying man. For he knew nothing about the dying man. But God put it into the mind of the priest to go that way, and to pass that house just at that moment. God has said, "*Ask and it shall be given to you. For every one that asketh receiveth.*" (Matthew vii.) For thirty years the old man had *asked* of God to receive the sacraments at his death and God who gives to every one who asks, took care that the sacraments should be given to him when he died.

Pray, then, every day for a happy death, and persevere to the end of your life in asking for this unspeakable grace; persevere also until death in leading a good life. Let no temptation, no hardship, no cross, no sickness, no tribulation, no persecution of any kind be too hard for you to endure in order to make sure of a happy death. "He that

shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved," says our Lord. (Matt. x. 22.)

Many years ago a young noble-man quitted the world and entered into a monastery. To try his virtue, his superior charged him with the humiliating office of swine-herd. The young nobleman continued for some time to fulfil this office very cheerfully; but one day he neglected to pray; and straightway satan, the father of pride, came and whispered into his ear: "What a strange occupation for the son of a baron to be herding swine!" The young novice hitherto so pious, bit his lip and all his fervor fled like a dream. Night came; he returned to the monastery and retired to the chapel. Any one who saw him there kneeling before our Lady's altar, buried in profound meditation, would have said: "There a saint is kneeling whose thoughts are in heaven." But, alas! his thoughts did not soar so high. He was thinking of his pleasant home, his father's castle and the careless, merry life he had led within its walls; and at last he resolved to fly from the monastery. "The night is dark," he thought, "the wind is high, it is just time to escape. Herding swine indeed, and I the son of one of the first lords of the Court! No! never! never!"

He arose, he walked with a firm step to the door of the chapel; he was about to cross the threshold, when, lo! a woman stood before him. At first he thought it was a dream; but no! — there she was — clad in snow-white robes — a lady of majestic mien, bright and beautiful as an angel of God! She smiled compassionately upon the bewildered novice, and beckoned him to follow her. He obeyed mechanically. The strange apparition moved towards the grave-yard. There the grey tombstones glistened before his eyes, ghastly and cold in the dim, watery moonlight. The clouds flitted across the sky like restless wandering

spirits; the huge yew trees swayed to and fro with the wind as if mourning over the dead. The nightbirds mingled their doleful cries with the hoarse raving of the storm. A cold shudder thrilled the very heart of the young monk. The white lady stretched forth her hand, and, O horror! in an instant the cold, grey tombstones are all astir; the graves are wide open; the dead, pale and cold, arise calmly, silently in their long, waving shrouds! What a fearful sight! The monk's blood froze in his veins. He would have fallen to the ground in sheer dismay, had he not been upheld by the fair lady's gentle hand. Then pointing to the gristly skeletons, his fair conductress said in a sweet, reproachful voice: "O deluded man! whither wilt thou fly? Yet a little while thou wilt be dead like these. See, here is the end of all earthly beauty; here is the end of all earthly glory!" The vision passed away, and the young monk returned to his cell and persevered in his life of penance and virtue even to his last breath, and he could say in truth:

The morn at length is dawning
 Of heaven's fadeless day;
 Hark, angel choirs are singing:
 "O, spirit haste away!
 Thy years of toil are o'er,
 In heaven thou 'lt grieve no more."

There every pain and sorrow
 For God's love borne, is blest,
 There, in God's love unbounded,
 The yearning soul finds rest.

There friends no more are parted,
 There love casts out all fear,
 Christ heals the broken-hearted
 And wipes away each tear.

There death comes ne'er, nor weeping,
 There's peace nought can destroy,
 There faith is changed to seeing,
 And hope to endless joy.

Who are the patrons for a happy death?

1. *The Blessed Virgin Mary.* The blessing of dying a happy death comes from Jesus through her hands. If she prays for us we shall be saved. If she does not pray for us we shall be lost.

2. *St. Joseph.* After the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph is always considered the great patron of a happy death. When he died Jesus and Mary were with him, helping him and consoling him. St. Alphonsus says — “Those who are devout servants of St. Joseph should hope with confidence that when they are dying St. Joseph with Jesus and Mary will come and help them.”

3. *The Saints* whose names you have received in baptism or confirmation.

4. *Your Guardian Angel.* No one will be more busy about you than your angel guardian when you are dying. He will watch the devils when they come to tempt you, and send them away. He will pray for you, if often in your life you have said prayers like the following.

Dear Angel, kind and faithful,
Bright Spirit ever blest!
Thou guardest me while waking,
Thou watchest o'er my rest.
In childhood thou didst guide me,
Didst teach me how to pray,
Didst hover ever near me,
So fondly night and day;
Can I thy love repay?

When hope's sweet blooming flowers
Have floated down life's stream,
When earthly joys have faded
Like some bright morning dream,
When autumn winds are wailing
Above the grove so drear
That hides the heart e'er faithful
In life and death so dear,
Ah, be thy help then near!

When earthly joys allure me
To turn my gaze away
From heaven's joys unfading,
Be thou my shield and stay.
Gainst hell's dark wiles, O, guard me
When death's dread hour is nigh,
And lead me to my true home,
With thee to reign on high,
Where love shall never die!

A pious sick woman was anointed by the priest. When going away she begged him to be sure and come when she was in her agony and give her the last blessing. "I know," she said, "you are very busy. You need not come again, therefore, until you are called. I hope, that, when I am dying some one will call you, and when you are called, I beg you come without delay."

The priest went away. The three following days he was busy day and night, attending to sick calls. The fourth night he laid down tired and sleepy. Suddenly he was roused and heard some one call him by name. He got up, looked around the house, looked outside, but could see no one. Instantly he thought of the sick woman who had promised to call him when she would be dying. He immediately set out. He was climbing the side of the mountain where the woman lived. Passing through the woods he found it so dark that he could not see his way. He began to regret that he had not brought his lantern with him. Suddenly he sees a bright light before him. A man rushes forward to meet him.

"Thank God, Father," he says, "that you have come. My sister is dying. She sent me to you with this lantern. She said you were on your way here." The priest hurried on, and was soon in the house of the sick woman.

"Ah! Father," said she, as the priest entered the house,

“some one woke you up, I’m sure. It was my guardian angel. During my illness I’ve begged my good angel to call my confessor when I should be dying, and I felt sure he would do so.” (Scherer, *Exempel Lexicon*, 1871.)

5. *St. Michael the Archangel*. In the prayers of the Church we read that St. Michael has been appointed by God to be prince over those souls, which are on their passage out of this world into the next to be judged.

6. *St. Barbara* is particularly prayed to for a happy death. The prayer of the Church is this — “O God, before we die, may we do true penance and make a sincere confession and receive the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the prayers of the Blessed Barbara, virgin and martyr.”

The following occurred at M. in the valley of the lower Inn. During the night the door-bell rang at the priest’s house. The priest arose to see what was the matter. — A stranger stood at the door and begged the priest to bring the last sacraments immediately to a man that was dying at such a house, naming the place. The priest went into the Church, took the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Oils, while the stranger took up the lantern and went before the priest, praying with great devotion. The priest arrived at the house, but found the doors closed and everything dark. The stranger set down the lantern and suddenly disappeared. The priest found himself alone. He knew not what to do. At last he knocked at the door. The door was opened and the farmer expressed his surprize to see the priest at that hour of the night. “Why,” said the priest, “I was called to bring the last sacraments to the dying man in your house.”

“There must be some mistake,” answered the farmer; “there’s no body sick here.”

The priest was about to return when the farmer suddenly remembered that a poor old beggar came to the house that evening and was lying in the stable. The farmer went straightway to the stable and found the beggar really dying. The priest went at once, heard the beggar's confession, gave him the last sacraments and the blessing of the Church.

The dying man had prayed every day to St. Barbara to obtain for him the grace of receiving the last sacraments at the hour of death. The strange messenger was probably his guardian angel. (Scherer's Exempel Lexicon, 1872.)

7. *The Holy Innocents.* When St. Francis de Sales was dying, he particularly prayed to them.

8. *Any saints or angels* to whom you have had a particular devotion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mental Prayer.

There are two kinds of prayer—*mental*, or that which is made by the mind, and *vocal*, or that which is uttered by the voice.

Mental prayer consists in meditating or reflecting on the eternal truths of God. By reflecting on those truths we come to understand the importance of salvation, the means we should adopt and the impediments we should remove, in order to be saved. Hence this kind of prayer has always been regarded as the regular method by which souls are sanctified. The saints devoted to it as much time as possible.

Before entering on the practice and method of meditation, it will be well to establish its necessity. There are two things upon which this necessity is grounded: the first is pointed out by St. Augustine, when he says that he who keeps his eyes shut cannot possibly see either the way or the means of salvation. Eternal truths are spiritual, and cannot be discerned by the eyes of the body, but only by the eyes of the mind in thought and consideration. Now he who does not practise meditation does not consider, and consequently does not see, the importance of eternal salvation, nor the way he should follow to gain it. St. Bernard, writing to Pope Eugenius on this subject, says: "I fear for thee, Eugenius, lest the multitude of affairs, prayer and meditation being intermitted, should bring thee to a hard heart, which does not dread, because it does not know itself." To obtain salvation we must have tender hearts,

that is, docile to receive the impressions of the divine inspirations, and prompt to put them in execution. It was this that Solomon asked of God: "Give, therefore, to thy servant a docile heart." (III. Kings iii. 9.) It is said in St. John, that they who are of God listen to his voice and follow it: "And they shall be taught of God. Every one that hath heard of the father, and hath learned, cometh to me." (St. John, vi. 45.) Our hearts are of themselves hard, because they are wholly inclined to carnal pleasures, and opposed to the laws of the spirit. They are softened by the influx of grace, and this is communicated to them by means of meditation, in which the soul, by considering the divine goodness and the great love which God has for it, and the immense benefits which he has conferred upon it, becomes inflamed, is softened and made obedient to the divine calls, as David experienced, who said: "In my meditation a fire shall flame out." (Ps. xxxviii. 4.) Without it the heart remains hard, obstinate, disobedient, and will be lost: "A hard heart shall fear evil at the last; and he that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccl. iii. 27.) And remaining hard, it will be so unhappy as not to know that it is so; because the heart which does not meditate "does not dread, because it does not know itself." As it is not sensible of its defects and the impediments which they place in the way of salvation, it does not remove them, but soon loves them, and is thus lost. St. Bernard, be it observed, was writing to a Pope, who had not, indeed, laid aside meditation (if he even sometimes intermitted it) on account of worldly concerns, but on account of affairs which regarded the interests of the Church and the glory of God. This should be borne in mind, especially by priests, who, having greater obligations, stand in greater need of divine grace, and consequently of meditation, to

obtain strength to discharge them; and not only by those who omit meditation to devote themselves to worldly affairs, but by those who neglect it to attend to spiritual works for the good of others, as to hear confessions, preach, or write.

Applicable to this, also, is what St. Teresa (letter 8.) wrote the Bishop of Osma, who, while he attended with great zeal to the salvation of his flock, paid little attention to meditation, from time to time relinquishing it. Hence the saint, having had a particular light, and probably even a revelation of such neglect on the part of this prelate, although he was her director, in order to promote his amendment, did not hesitate to admonish him of it, writing to him as follows: "Representing to our Lord the graces which he had conferred on your Lordship in making you humble, charitable, and zealous, I besought him to give you an increase of all virtues, when he made known to me that your Lordship was wanting in that which is principally necessary (and, if the foundation be wanting, the work cannot stand, but must fall), namely, meditation: not persevering in it with fortitude, and thus interrupting that union, which is the unction of the Holy Spirit, from the want of which arises all that dryness and disunion which the soul experiences." And she adds: "Although it may appear to us that we are free from imperfections, yet, when God opens for us the eyes of the soul, as he is accustomed to do in meditation, we then indeed discover our imperfections." And this, in fact, is what the Holy Ghost declares, that for want of meditation the whole world is filled with sinners, and hell with souls. "With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart. (Jer. xii. 11.)

The second fundamental and more weighty principle

on which is grounded the necessity of meditation is, that those who do not meditate do not pray, and thus lose their souls. The virtues of those who do not pray cannot be firm and persevering, because perseverance is only to be obtained by prayer, and by persevering prayer. Hence, those who do not pray perseveringly will not persevere. It was on this account that St. Paul exhorted his disciples to pray always, without intermission: "Pray without ceasing." (I. Thess. v. 17.) And for the same reason our Blessed Saviour "spoke a parable . . . that we ought always to pray, and not to faint." (St. Luke, xvii. 1.) Meditation, therefore, is morally necessary for the preservation of divine grace in the soul. I say *morally necessary*, because, although the soul, strictly speaking, may, without the aid of meditation, continue in the state of grace, yet, if meditation be neglected, it will be morally impossible, that is, very difficult, not to fall into grievous faults; and the reason, as has just been said is that when a person does not meditate, and is distracted with other affairs, he knows but little of his own spiritual wants, of his dangers, and of the means which he ought to adopt to escape them, and being but little sensible of the urgent necessity of prayer; he neglects it, and thus is lost. The great Bishop Palafox, in his annotations of the above-mentioned letter of St. Teresa, which he regards as one of her most spiritual productions, says; "From this we, as prelates, ought to learn that neither zeal nor charity will suffice without meditation, because virtues unassisted by meditation are deficient, and we shall be lost. The reason is evident: how can charity continue to abide in us if God does not give us perseverance? How will he give us perseverance, if we do not ask it of him? How shall we ask it of him without meditation? How can this miracle take place (of

obtaining perseverance without meditation), if the channel be wanting through which the divine influence is conveyed to the soul, which is meditation? Without meditation there is no communication with God for the preservation of virtue; neither is there any other means, nor any other method, of obtaining good things from God."

Our Lord, on the other hand, admonishes us that he who dwells on eternal truths, on death, judgment, and a happy or miserable eternity which await us, will avoid sin: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccl. vii. 40.) Holy David declared that the consideration of eternity induced him to exercise himself in the practice of virtue, and to correct the imperfections of his soul: "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years, and I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit." (Ps. lxxvi. 6, 7.) And if, says a pious author, it were to be asked of the damned: Why are you now in hell? the greater part would answer: We are now in hell because we did not think of hell. It is impossible that he who calls to mind, in his spiritual exercises, the eternal truths, and attentively dwells upon them and believes them, should not be converted to God. St. Vincent de Paul said that if, during a mission, a sinner should perform all the spiritual exercises, and should not be converted, it would be a miracle, and yet he who preaches and speaks during such exercises is only man; but in meditation it is God who speaks: "I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart." (Osee, ii. 14.) Assuredly God speaks better and more powerfully than any preacher. All the saints have become saints by means of meditation; and experience shows us that those who practise meditation very seldom fall into mortal sin; and if they unfortunately do sometimes fall into it, they soon arise, by

means of meditation, and return again to God. Meditation and sin cannot exist together. A servant of God observes, that while many may say the rosary, the office of the Blessed Virgin, exercise themselves in fasting, and still remain in sin, no one can give himself to meditation and continue an enemy of God; he must either renounce meditation or renounce sin. But if he renounces not meditation, he will renounce not only sin, but all affection to creatures, and give his whole heart to God: "In my meditation a fire shall flame out." (Ps. xxxviii. 4.) Meditation is the furnace in which the soul is inflamed with divine love. It is impossible to consider attentively the divine bounty, how much God deserves our love, and the love which he has shown and still shows us, and not be inflamed with his love. The royal prophet says, that when he thought of God, and meditated on the wonderful works of his love for man, his heart was inflamed with the most ardent desire to please him, and his soul rendered incapable of supporting the superabundant consolations with which our Lord communicated himself to him: "I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away." (Ps. lxxvi. 4.) We come now to the practice of meditation.

The best place for meditation is the church or chapel; but where a person cannot avail himself of this, he may make his meditation at home, or he may even make it on the road, or at work, by fixing his mind on God. How many poor peasants, having no other opportunities, meditate well while they are at work, or journeying from place to place! He who seeks God finds him in all places and at all times.

The best time for meditation is the morning. The duties of the day will go on very indifferently if a person neglects to make his meditation in the morning. Meditation

ought properly to be made twice in the day, morning and evening; but when it can be made but once, it should be in the morning. The venerable Caraffa says, that a fervent act of love, made during the morning meditation, is sufficient to keep the soul in a state of holy fervor during the whole day. As to the length of time which should be spent in meditation, a confessor or director will best regulate that by his experience and prudence. This, however, is certain, that half an hour is not sufficient for those, who would attain a high degree of perfection. For those who are only beginning, half an hour may suffice; but above all, they should not discontinue their meditations when visited by spiritual dryness.

We come now to the different parts of meditation, of which there are three: the preparation, the meditation itself, and the conclusion. The preparation consists of three acts: of faith in the presence of God, of humility, and of prayer for light and assistance. Say for the first: I believe that thou art present, O God, and I adore thee from the depth of my own nothingness. For the second; I have deserved hell, O Lord, on account of my sins; I am sorry for having offended thee; pardon me, I beseech thee, in thy great mercy. For the third: O Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ, and of Mary, his Mother, enlighten me in this my meditation, and enable me to profit by it. Then say a "Hail Mary" to the Blessed Virgin, to obtain this light, and a "Glory be to the Father" in honor of St. Joseph, and your angel guardian, and your patron saint. These acts should be made devoutly, but briefly, and then pass on to the meditation.

For this purpose those who can read may make use of a book, and pause as soon as anything particular strikes the mind. St. Francis de Sales says, that in this we should

imitate the bees, which stay on a flower so long as it affords them honey, and then pass on to another. Those who do not know how to read, may meditate on the last four things, the benefits and favors of God, and, above all, on the life and passion of Jesus Christ; which last, St. Francis de Sales says, ought to be the ordinary subject of our meditations. Oh, what a delightful book for devout souls is the passion of Jesus! In it we may read, better than in any other book, the malice of sin and the love of God for man. The venerable Brother Bernard of Corlione, having asked our Blessed Saviour if it were pleasing to him that he should learn to read, the crucifix before which he was kneeling answered: "To read what? what books? I am thy book; this is all that is necessary for thee."

The advantages of meditation consist principally in exciting our hearts to produce holy affections, fervent petitions for grace, and wholesome, practical resolutions. When, then, a person has meditated on some eternal maxim, and when God has spoken to his heart, he must then with his heart speak to God in affection.

Now, these affections consist in acts of faith, gratitude, adoration, humility, and above all, love and contrition, which last is also an act of love. Love is the golden bond which binds the soul to God. "Charity is the bond of perfection." (Coloss. iii. 14.) Every act of love is a treasure in which we are made partakers of the divine friendship: "An infinite treasure to men! which they that use, become the friends of God." (Wisd. vii. 14.) "I love them that love me." (Prov. viii. 17.) "He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father." (St. John, xiv. 21.) "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (I. St. Peter, iv. 8.) The venerable Sister Mary of the Cross saw a great fire, in which chaff was consumed as soon as it was thrown into it, by which

she was given to understand that, in like manner, all the faults of the soul are cancelled by an act of divine love. Moreover, St. Thomas teaches that every act of love acquires for us a degree of eternal glory. Now it is an act of love to say: "My God, I love thee above all things; I love thee with my whole heart. I desire that all should love thee." It is an act of resignation in all things to the divine will to say: "Make known to me, O Lord, what is pleasing to thee, and I will willingly accomplish it." It is an act of oblation of ourselves to God to say: "Behold me and do with me and all things that belong to me what thou wilt." These oblations of ourselves are very pleasing to God. St. Teresa offered herself to him fifty times in the day. The most perfect act of love is to delight in the infinite happiness of God.

In meditation we feel induced to pray to God with humility and confidence, that he may enlighten us, pardon our sins, grant us perseverance, a happy death, and above all the gift of his holy love. This is another great advantage of meditation.

St. Francis de Sales exhorts us to seek for divine love before all other graces, because, as he observes, by obtaining this love we obtain all. If, however, the soul, on account of spiritual dryness and desolation, cannot exercise herself in this manner, let her repeat that prayer of David: "*Incline unto my aid, O God! O Lord, make haste to help me!*" The venerable Father Paul Segneri said that he had learned from experience that there is no exercise more advantageous in meditation than to repeat the same petition over and over again.

This part of mental prayer, which consists in asking of God all the graces which we need is of the greatest importance. It is by attending to it well, that we acquire a

habit and facility of turning to God for help in all difficulties, dangers and temptations. Without attending to this we shall scarcely ever acquire this habit and facility. Now without this habit it will be impossible to avoid mortal sin in the discharge of our duties, and in the difficult temptations by which we are frequently assailed.

Although it is very important for us to ask, in our meditations, all the graces we need and especially for the graces suggested by our reflections, yet, we should be very careful to pray in every meditation, for three particular graces; first, for the pardon of all our sins and of the temporal punishments due to them; secondly, for the gift of the love of God, and thirdly, for the gift of final perseverance, and for the grace to persevere till death in praying for this great gift. We should be careful to ask also those three graces at Mass, after communion, and in all our other spiritual exercises.

Certain persons, having heard or read in the lives of St. Teresa and other saints, of the grades of supernatural prayer, namely, the prayer of quiet, of sleep, or suspension of the faculties, of union, of ecstasy or rapture, of flight and impetus of the spirit, and of the wound of love, may feel anxious to possess, and even pray fervently for these supernatural gifts. The learned and pious Palafox, Bishop of Osma, in a note on the eighteenth letter of St. Teresa, says: "Observe that these supernatural graces, which God deigned to bestow on St. Teresa and other saints, are not necessary for the attainment of sanctity, since, without them, many have arrived at a high degree of perfection, and obtained eternal life, while many who enjoyed them were afterwards damned." He says that "the practice of the Gospel virtues, and particularly of the love of God, being the true and only way to sanctify our souls, it is

superfluous, and even presumptuous, to desire and seek so extraordinary gifts." These virtues are acquired by prayer, and by corresponding to the lights and helps of God, who ardently desires our sanctification: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." (Thess. iv. 3.)

Speaking of the degrees of supernatural prayer described by St. Teresa, the holy bishop wisely observes, that "as to the prayer of *quiet*, we should only desire and beg of God to free us from all attachment and affection to worldly goods, which, instead of giving peace to the soul, fill it with inquietude and affliction. Solomon justly called them "vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit. (Eccl. i. 14.)

"The heart of man can never enjoy true peace till it is divested of all that is not God, and entirely devoted to his holy love to the exclusion of every other object. But man himself cannot attain to this perfect consecration of his being to God; he can obtain it only by constant prayer. As to the *sleep*, or *suspension of the powers*, we should entreat the Almighty to keep them in a profound sleep with regard to all temporal affairs, and awake only to meditate on his divine goodness, and to seek divine love and eternal goods. For all sanctity and the perfection of charity; consist in the union of our will with the holy will of God. As to *union of the powers*, we should only pray God to teach us, by his grace, not to think of, or seek, that or wish for anything but what he wills. As to *ecstasy*, or *rapture*, let us beseech the Lord to eradicate from our hearts all inordinate love of ourselves and of creatures, and to draw us entirely to himself. As to the *flight of the spirit*, we should merely implore the grace of perfect detachment from the world, that, like the swallow, which never seeks its food on the earth, and even feeds in its flight, we may never fix our heart on any sensual enjoyment,

but, always tending towards heaven, employ the goods of this world only for the support of life. As to the *impulse of spirit*, let us ask of God courage and strength to do that violence to ourselves which may be necessary to resist the attacks of the enemy, to overcome our passions, or to embrace sufferings, even in the midst of spiritual dryness and desolation. Finally, as to the *wound of love*, as the remembrance of a wound is constantly kept alive by the pain it inflicts, so we should supplicate our Lord to wound our hearts with holy love to such a degree, that we may be always reminded of his goodness and affection towards us, that thus we may devote our lives to love, and please him by our works and affections. These graces will not be obtained without prayer; but by humble, confident, and persevering prayer, all the gifts of God may be procured."

The third advantage to be derived from meditation consists in making (at least at the end of it) some good resolution, not only in general, as to avoid all deliberate faults, even the slightest, and to give ourselves wholly to God, but also in particular, as to avoid with greater care some defect to which we may have been more subject, or to practise more diligently some virtue in which we may be called upon to exercise ourselves more frequently, or to bear with the annoyance of some disagreeable person, to obey more exactly a superior or a rule, to be more attentive in mortifying ourselves in some particular circumstances, and the like. We ought never to rise from meditation without making some particular resolution.

The last part of meditation is the conclusion, which should consist of three acts: First, we should thank God for the lights with which he has favored us; secondly, we should resolve to keep our good resolutions; thirdly, we

should beseech the Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and of Mary, to enable us to be faithful to them; and finish all by recommending to him the souls in Purgatory, the prelates of the Church, sinners, and all our relatives, friends, and benefactors, with an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary," which are the most useful prayers taught us by the holy Catholic Church.

When we have finished our meditation, we should first, as St. Francis de Sales recommends, make a spiritual nosegay to smell at the rest of the day; that is, we should select one or two points by which we may have been more particularly affected, and recall them occasionally to our minds, to invigorate us in the discharge of all our duties. Secondly, we should endeavor to put our good resolutions in practice as soon as possible, as well on the trifling as on the great occasions which may present themselves: for example, we should overcome with meekness any one who may be angry with us; or mortify ourselves in our seeing, hearing, or speaking. And we should be particular in preserving, by means of silence, as far as is possible, the sentiment of those affections which we have experienced; otherwise, if we immediately distract ourselves by useless words or actions, the fervor of devotion which we acquired in our meditation will soon be cooled and extinguished.

Lastly, and above all we should be constant in meditation, and neither discontinue nor diminish it in time of spiritual dryness, although we should be for a long time ever so desolate. How many courtiers, says St. Francis de Sales, come to pay homage to their prince, and are satisfied with being only seen by him! Let us go to meditation, to wait on our God and to please him; and if he be pleased to speak to us, and to favor us with his consolations, let us thank him for his great goodness; if not let us be content

to remain peaceably in his divine presence, adoring him and exposing to him our wants; and if the Lord should not then speak to us, he will certainly regard our attention and fidelity, and, according to our confidence, will hear our supplications.

This is the first method of meditation, in which many saints spent several years before they were admitted to a more simple and more sublime spirit of prayer, called *contemplation*.

Those who sincerely wish to sanctify themselves, must begin here; for it is of great importance to imprint well, on their minds, in the beginning, the truths of faith by the sweet and simple consideration which they ought to make of them.

The second method of meditation consists in simply meditating on the Gospel and the mysteries of faith and entertaining ourselves familiarly with our Lord on all he has done and suffered for us, without the use of the imagination. This method is better, and holier than the first. It may be wisely adopted, if the soul feels any attraction for it. However, in every degree of prayer, we must preserve a holy liberty to follow the lights and attractions of the Holy Ghost.

A soul that is faithful in the practice of virtue, which is the true fruit of prayer, will not stop here. The Lord will conduct her to the prayer of a most simple union, and holy simplicity of the presence of his divine providence. "There are some souls," says St. Francis de Sales, "who cannot confine their minds to any particular mystery, as they are drawn to a certain sweet simplicity, which keeps them in great tranquility before God, without any other consideration than that they are in his presence and that he is their only good. In this state the soul is led by the

sweet invitation of her heavenly spouse to enjoy his holy presence; to forbear any studied efforts to excite holy affections and resolutions by the usual mode of attentive consideration of some religious truth; she exchanges her natural activity for a delightful amorous repose; the soul is sweetly attracted to view the divine perfections in a more distinct and simple manner, to unite her pious desires with the divine will. In this state, the mind is enlightened with a simple and clear view of God's amiable perfections; the heart is inflamed with an ecstasy of love and the whole soul with all its powers, is absorbed in the contemplation of the beloved object. In this manner the prayer of the soul becomes continual by her attention to God in all things, by her invariable desire to please him, by perpetually embracing his adorable will on all occasions, even under the severest strokes of adversity. Moreover her spirit of recollection becomes so constant and uninterrupted, that she finds great difficulty in bestowing a due attention on such exterior occupations as demand her care. She may truly say with the sacred spouse: "I sleep, but my heart watches;" that is, in every action of life such a soul can say: I am waking, but my heart reposes; I am speaking, but my heart loves; I am performing the duty of recreation, but my heart prays; I am enjoying necessary repose, but my heart speaks to God. In this state, the pious soul entrusts all her concerns, with perfect security to the care of her heavenly spouse; she leaves to him exclusively the choice of his own favors, and the degree of holy contemplation he chooses to bestow; in every instance, she receives with the same simplicity interior comfort or spiritual dryness, overwhelming joy, or the most distressing desolation of mind, in accordance with the gracious designs of divine goodness in completing the work of her sanctification.

In order to make any progress in holy contemplation, it is ever necessary to be singularly attentive to the presence of God and to be extremely assiduous in withdrawing the soul from vain, superfluous and distracting thoughts and reminiscences; for the divine spouse manifests his favors in proportion to the attention which he receives, and indicates his will where there is a disposition to lose sight of created objects, in order to communicate with the Creator. The predominant qualities which are required in this exercise of heavenly contemplation are, great simplicity of intention and extreme purity of heart, without the studied and elaborate efforts of the creature. If distractions divert the soul from the calm performance of this holy duty, she is required to exercise perfect patience and make use of the most amorous aspirations. "My God, thou art the only support of my soul, my rest, my repose, my consolation; though I should cease to live, I will not cease to love.

We must not force ourselves to the prayer of contemplation, but wait with humility and patience the hour which our Saviour has destined to introduce us to this happiness. For to go to God we must let ourselves be conducted by his spirit. His choice is always best for us; some possess this simplicity and repose in a greater degree than others; and find there much light. It seems God makes use of this means to conduct souls to the end of their journey, and we receive there all necessary lights and strength. This attraction is so great that souls drawn from it, seem to lose their centre, and liberty of spirit, and enter into a restraint and perplexity, which robs them of their peace, and greatly retards their progress.

Souls thus absorbed in God should not strain themselves to make acts and reflections, because then God sup-

ports them in union of love with himself. "Then," says St. Teresa, "God occupies with his light the understanding, and prevents it from thinking of anything else. When God thus wishes that our understanding should cease to reason, he occupies it and gives it a knowledge superior to that which it can arrive at, and keeps the intellect suspended." "When therefore in prayer," says St. Alphonsus, "God makes us feel that he wishes to speak to us, and does not wish that we should address him, we should not try to do anything ourselves, lest we impede the divine operation in us; we should only apply our loving attention to the voice of God, and say: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." This repose of the soul in God, includes in an excellent manner all the exterior acts which we could make to satisfy our inclination. It is better thus to sleep in the arms of the Lord, than to watch elsewhere.

When God, however, does not speak to us, then we should address him in prayer; we should not lose our time in doing nothing, but should make acts of contrition, of love, purpose of advancement in perfection. These acts, however, should be made calmly and sweetly; and those acts to which the soul feels more attracted, should be made in preference to others.

This kind of prayer, in which the soul is absorbed in God, seldom lasts long; the effects of it, however, last, and so, when the soul returns to the active state, it ought to return also to labor to preserve the fruit received in contemplation, by reading, reflecting, offering up pious affections, and performing similar acts of devotion, because, as St. Augustine confesses, he always felt himself after being exalted to some unusual union with God, drawn back again, as it were by a weight, to the miseries of this life, so that he

felt obliged again to assist himself by acts of the will and the understanding, to a union with God.

Those who are conducted by this way are obliged to a great purity of heart, self-abasement, submission and total dependence on God. They ought to be simple in mind, retrenching all reflections on the past, present and future, and instead of considering what they do, or will do, they ought to look up to God, forgetting as much as possible all things for this continual remembrance, uniting their mind with his goodness in all that happens at each moment, and this most simply.

It often happens that souls which are in this way, are tried by many distractions, and left without any sensible support, our Lord withdrawing the sentiment of his sweet presence, and all interior light, so that they are in total inability and insensibility, but sometimes less so than at others. This astonishes souls which have not much experience. We always love the sweetness and delight of consolations; nevertheless the rigor of aridities is more rich in fruit; and though St. Peter loved the mountain of Thabor and fled from that of Calvary, yet the latter is the most profitable, and the blood shed upon the one is more desirable than the brightness which environs the other. It is better to eat bread without sugar than to eat sugar without bread. When the Lord deprives us of those consolations and of the sense of his presence, it is in order that our heart should cleave to nothing sensible, but to him only and his good pleasure. Jacob certainly was able to take off the skin with which his mother had covered his neck and hands, because it did not adhere to him; if any one had tried to tear off that of Esau, the operation would have been so painful, as to make him cry out with pain. So, in the same manner, when we cry out when God with-

draws sensible consolations, it is a sign that they cleave to our heart or that our heart is attached to them; Jesus then reveals himself for a little while to those who enter his service, to detach them from the false pleasures of the senses, and attract their love more strongly to himself. Then he hides himself, and withdraws his consolations to try them, purify them, humiliate them, to make them understand their poverty and misery, and place a proper guard on his divine favors; to oblige them to pray with faith and seek him with submission, that they may merit his graces. The soul in the absence of Jesus, is sad and afflicted, but if it continues faithful he will console it. Like the disciples, it rejoices on seeing the Lord, and having learned wisdom by the vicissitudes which it has experienced, disposes it to lead an interior life, and love God purely, without attaching itself inordinately to his consolations.

The ways of God are admirable. They are ways of grace, unknown to nature: ways of wisdom, incomprehensible to human reason; ways of peace, that ensure tranquillity to the mind; ways of love, that charm and delight the soul.

God works for us, when he seems to be against us. He is drawing near unto us, when he seems to be afar off. He advances our affairs, when his Providence seems to have abandoned them to ruin. He enriches, when he seems to impoverish us. He saves us at the moment, when he seems to have forsaken us. He gives us life, when he seems to give us death. He leads us to peace by warfare; to perfection by the way of imperfection; to glory through ignominy; to the promised land through frightful deserts; to heaven by the road which seems farthest from it, and which appears to lead to hell!

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This way is that of the saints, and the most secure; but it is poor, deprived of sentiment, relish, knowledge, power, affection, desire and love. In fine, it is poor, and destitute of all but the resolution not to offend God willfully, and to please him in all things, and especially to belong to him. This is all that this poor soul has, and this in such a manner, that it receives no satisfaction or sentiment, saying only, though without feeling, that it does not wish to sin, and that it desires our Lord to fulfil his good pleasure in it. The soul does good and refrains from evil through reason, remains in all things without any satisfaction, wishing to remain willingly and sweetly in this privation for the good pleasure of God, and esteeming more his holy will than all his consolations. This is to be poor in spirit, it is in this state that our Lord wishes the soul to be and to remain in it willingly and cheerfully. A soul in this state should practise as many acts of virtue as it can, saying sometimes to our Lord, though without relish: Lord I am all thine, and I wish to do everything for the love of thee.

A soul in aridity may still make all the acts of prayer; and though these acts may be made without relish or affection, yet they will not be without profit; for the prayer of patience, submission and abandonment to the good pleasure of God, which the soul ought to practise on this occasion, will be more agreeable to the divine Majesty than a prayer full of spiritual consolations. The soul should continue to keep itself before God with profound reverence and a devout exterior joyfully suffering its painful trial.

It is a solid rapture to go out of our inclination. We should, with great simplicity, leave to our heavenly Father the care and conduct of our prayer and our interior, and

be careful to keep close to him, and practise faithfully the solid virtues which his goodness presents to us at each moment, without any further anxiety.

It is certain, that when this aridity is great, the poor soul can only suffer. But this poor suffering is a prayer most agreeable to God, if accompanied with humility, submission and confidence and if the soul is content with the will of God, and with the honor of remaining in his presence as a slave before his Lord, as a mendicant before his rich sovereign, a helpless wretch before the Omnipotent, a disciple near his good master, a daughter at the feet of her father, and in the exercise of similar affections as the Holy Ghost shall suggest. When these affections are entertained with sweet submission, they are profitable, and they can always be uttered, even without relish. Besides, it is not our satisfaction which we ought to seek, but that of God who wills it thus.

You will say, that, in the midst of your darkness, you cannot make these considerations, that you cannot, it seems, even say a word to our Lord. You do well to say: "it seems;" for this is not really so. The sacred Council of Trent declares, that we are obliged to believe, that God and his grace never so far abandon us, as not to be able to have recourse to his bounty, and protest, that in spite of all the trouble of our soul, we wish to belong to him. But remark, that all this is in the superior part of the soul, and because the inferior part does not see it, it remains in trouble; this afflicts you and makes you think yourself miserable, and then you begin to pity yourself, as if it were a thing very worthy of compassion, to see yourself without consolation.

In this state you should never make any useless reflections on what you do, have done, or will do, or what are

your temptations, pains and inclinations for such curiosity would not only be useless, but dangerous. You should look to God in doing good, and flying from evil as much as you can; and if you fail, return to God with an humble mind, full of sweet confidence, trusting that God will aid you, and that you will do better. "The most miserable," says St. Francis de Sales, "should have the most confidence." You must do this and be cheerful, suffering the cross of our Lord patiently, without desiring to quit it; you must try to advance blindly in simplicity and obey faithfully what you are counselled.

Ah! let us consider, that our Lord and our Master was pleased to suffer these interior disgusts, but in an incomparably greater degree. Let us listen to the words which he uttered on the cross: "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" He was reduced to extremity; for it was only the highest point of his mind that was not overwhelmed. But remark, that he speaks to God, to show us that it is not impossible.

Which is better, at this time you will ask to speak to God of our pain and misery, or to speak to him of something else? I say, that in this, as in all other temptations, it is better to divert our mind from its pain, with a sweet violence, speaking to God of something else; for if we speak of our trouble, it will truly serve to increase our pain, our nature being such that we cannot see our trials without being moved to compassion.

But you will say, that, if you do not pay attention to it, you will not remember to tell it to your director. And what matters it? We are certainly like children, who are glad to go and tell their mother that they have been stung by a bee, so that their mother may pity them, and blow upon the wound which is already healed. For we wish to

go and tell our director or superior that we have been afflicted, and to increase our affliction, we relate it all in detail, without forgetting the least circumstance, that can excite pity. Is not this great childishness! If we have committed some infidelity, well, let us tell it; if we have been faithful, we must also mention it, but briefly without exaggeration.

To be without light, taste, sentiment, the enjoyment of all knowledge and without any satisfaction, or assistance from creatures, oh! how good this state is! what can you do in this state, but like a bird without plumage, hide under the wings of your good mother, providence, and remain there in safety, not daring to come out, for fear that the hawk might catch you.

Whatever trial may happen to you, you must never relent in your duty, not considering whether you perform it with your ordinary fervor and joy; for truly, that is not in your power, but fidelity is.

Blessed are those who suffer interior pains, provided they remain faithful to God, and continue constant in spite of these contrary winds.

Let us not be astonished at the combats between the inferior and superior part of the soul. Such attacks are ordinary for those who serve the Lord. These temptations are a fire in which God wishes to purify us. They will all pass away at the hour that divine Providence has marked. Let us try as much as possible to be joyful in this trial. We advance more by this way, if we be faithful, than if we enjoyed consolation. God will easily pardon faults of weakness, on account of which we should not be afflicted, but which we should allow to nourish the love of our abjection, the practice of which is dear to God.

It is a good practise, when we fail in the fidelity which

we owe to God in the practise of virtue, to try to regain by humility, what we have lost by our tepidity, humbling ourselves before God peaceably and tranquilly, then returning sweetly to our ordinary duties with new confidence in God. If we fall fifty times a day, let us rise as often in this manner with simplicity, without useless reflections about ourselves; for generally a greater fault is committed by examining and reflecting on what we have done (especially when this reflection has been forbidden us) than our first fault is. I wonder, that some souls make more account of a little fault that is but a trifle, than they do of failing in the advice given them for their perfection. We must despise the attacks of the devil; we must not dispute with him, nor answer anything but: God be blessed;—and this two or three times a day. Let us make positive acts of renunciation of his wicked suggestions; let us not be disquieted, for the wicked spirit intends only to disturb and trouble us. Let us bear humbly this cross, without considering it. If we cannot help being disquieted, at least, let us not be troubled at being disturbed. We must learn how to live in peace in the midst of war, and to remain content in the midst of agitations, and all sorts of temptations. “What does he know, who has not been tempted,” says Thomas a Kempis.

Let us take to our hearts a lesson—no lesson can braver be—
 From the ways of the tapestry-weavers on the other side of the sea.
 Above their heads the pattern hangs, they study it with care,
 The while their fingers deftly work, their eyes are fastened there.
 They tell this curious thing, besides, of the patient plodding
 weaver,

He works on the wrong side evermore, but works for the right
 side ever.

It is only when the weaving stops and the web is loosed and turned,
 That he sees his real handiwork—that his marvellous skill is
 learned.

Ah, the sight of its delicate beauty, how it pays him for all his cost!

No rarer, dantier work than his, was ever done by the frost.
Then the master bringeth him golden hire, and giveth him praise
as well;

And how happy the heart of the weaver is, no tongue but his own
can tell.

The years of man are the looms of God, let down from the place
of the sun,

Wherein we are always weaving, till the mystic web is done.

Weaving blindly, but weaving surely each for himself his fate;

We may not see how the bright side looks—we can only weave and
wait.

But, looking above for the pattern, no weaver hath need to fear,
If the bright golden thread that he weaveth be God's dearest will,
year by year;

If he keeps the face of the Saviour, forever and always in sight,
His toil shall be sweeter than honey, his weaving is sure to be right.

And when his task is ended and the web is turned and shown,
He shall hear the voice of the Master, it shall say to him: "Well
done!"

And the white-winged angels of heaven to bear him thence shall
come down,

And God shall give gold for his guerdon, not coin, but a crown.

Although we neither feel, nor see in the midst of desolation and darkness, it matters not. The Lord is with us, and upon this ground, as it is arid, we must build solid faith, firm confidence, and the efficacious love of a perfect submission. We must say, though without feeling: I believe, I hope more firmly, than if I abounded in lights and sweetness. I am well pleased not to have any, and to say to thee, without taste or sentiment whatsoever thou art my God; I am all thine. Then we must remain in peace.

Perfect annihilation of self and complete submission to the will of God, is a great happiness. Alas! it is the only glory of souls dedicated to holy love. Let us be faithful to this practice, and do nothing according to our inclina-

tions, but all according to reason, and true piety, both in acting and suffering.

In order to ascertain clearly, whether in any instance, the practice of contemplation or sweet repose in the Lord, comes from God, the following marks are given. The first is that, in taking up a point of meditation you should, without any artificial efforts on your part or that of creatures, find your heart, mind, and all your powers sweetly attracted to this sacred repose.

Secondly, amidst all the delights of this holy prayer, you must feel drawn to a more perfect obedience to God and your superiors, to an entire dependence on God's providence and a complete attachment to the divine will.

Thirdly, this sweet repose must have the effect of detaching you from all created objects and uniting you more perfectly to your Sovereign God; for it is not reasonable to suppose that he who begins to taste the unalloyed sweets of heavenly things, should bestow his attention on objects beneath his regard.

Fourthly, this practice of contemplation must render you more sincere and candid in the declaration of your faults, and fill you with a child-like simplicity, humility and self-annihilation.

Fifthly, this practice must be followed by a strong determination to bear with unconquered patience all dryness, desolation, and a total absence of comfort which may eventually happen.

Sixthly, this spirit of prayer must render you more desirous, ever eager to suffer all things without any alleviation but what arises from the good pleasure of the beloved.

The seventh, and most certain mark is, when this sweet repose of heavenly contemplation contributes to render you

more humble, inspires you with an utter contempt for the world and yourself and fixes your esteem on the lowliness, the humiliation and the sorrows of the cross.

These are decisive landmarks to ascertain the boundaries which distinguish real contemplation from fanatical illusion.

CHAPTER IX.

How to make progress in prayer.

The successful man in every calling, whether literary, scientific, or commercial, is he who can say: "This one thing I do constantly." When Michael Angelo was asked why he did not marry, he replied: "Painting is my wife, and my works are my children." He became a great painter because he was a whole man at one thing. He touched and retouched the canvas hundreds of times to produce a good painting. Thousands of men have failed in life by dabbling in too many things. To do anything perfectly, there should be an exclusiveness, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment, to that one object, which shall make all other objects for the time being seem worthless.

This is the first law of success in worldly pursuits. It is also the first law of success in spiritual pursuits, in the road of perfection. To become virtuous we must constantly repeat the acts of virtue; to become patient we must often repeat the acts of patience; to become strong in faith, in obedience, in holy purity, we must constantly practise the acts of those virtues. In like manner, to become a man of prayer we must often repeat our prayers. This frequent repetition is the law of success. St. Teresa repeated the offering of herself to God fifty times in the day. St. Martha repeated her prayer a hundred times in the day and a hundred times in the night. St. Francis Borgia also repeated his prayer a hundred times in the day. St. Philip Neri made a kind of rosary of the words, "O God! come to my aid; O

Lord! make haste to help me." He recited this rosary sixty times in the day, and taught his penitents to do the same. St. Gertrude repeated the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," three hundred and sixty-five times a day. St. Leonard of Port Maurice recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary two hundred times a day: he used to say that we should not let a moment pass without repeating the words, "Have mercy on me, O Jesus! have mercy on me." He also tells us that he knew a man who repeated this prayer, "Jesus, have mercy on me," one hundred times in less than an hour. St. Bartholomew the Apostle repeated his acts of divine adoration two hundred times every day. St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, made every day three hundred genuflections in adoration of the Blessed Trinity, and he made the sign of the cross one hundred times before each canonical hour. St. Margaret of Cortona repeated the Our Father over a thousand times in the day. St. Alphon-sus was accustomed, before going to bed, to repeat his acts of faith, hope, charity, sorrow, etc., ten times. Jesus Christ himself has taught us by his example to repeat our prayers. When the agony and terror of death came upon him in the garden of Olives, he prayed with the greatest earnestness, and uttered again and again the same prayer. We also learn this practice from the blessed in heaven, who do not cease day and night to sing: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God, who was, who is, and who is to come." The power of prayer does not consist in many words; it consists rather in repeating constantly the same petition with greater fervor. What is more powerless than the scattered clouds of steam as they rise in the sky? They are as impotent as the dew-drops that fall nightly upon the earth. But, concentrated and condensed in a steam-boiler, they are able to cut through solid rock, to hurl mountains into the sea, and

to bring the antipodes to our doors. If we wish to make our prayer powerful with God, we must continually condense our desires in the boiler of our heart, upon one particular object, one grace that we need most. And, oh! what a powerful prayer is such a condensed desire with God. Many have become rich by dint of perseverance in humble occupations. The saints became rich in the grace of God, because they persevered in repeating the same prayer. Oneness of aim and the direction of the energies to a single pursuit, while all others are waived aside as profitless, enable the veriest weakling to make his mark where he strikes.

One great means, then, to make progress in prayer is to practise it frequently.

But how is it possible, you ask, for one to pray so much in the course of the day? St. Alphonsus answers this question. "Give me," says he, "a soul that truly loves God, and she will know how to do it." It is sweet and agreeable for a loving soul to think of her beloved, and so converse frequently and familiarly with him.

But you will say: "I cannot pray as much as the saints have done; in order to do this, I should be a saint myself. If I cannot make progress in prayer unless I do as much as they have done, I must give up all hope of ever acquiring it." Softly, my friend; have a little patience! Rome was not built in a day. The saints did not acquire the spirit of prayer all at once, nor was the practice of prayer natural to them, at first; but they persevered in it in spite of every obstacle, and were at last raised to a high degree of contemplation.

The celebrated missionary of Peru, Father Diego Martinez, who converted so many thousands of heathens by his preaching and virtues, lived in constant communion with God; he used to spend whole nights in prayer. Sometimes

he was seen raised in the air even above the tops of the highest trees; at such times he appeared surrounded by a heavenly splendor, and kneeling amid two brilliant columns of fire. But he was not satisfied with praying during the night; he prayed, also, during the entire day. As he was constantly occupied with his missionary labors, he maintained the spirit of prayer and recollection by frequent ejaculatory prayers; these prayers often exceeded four thousand, nay, even five thousand, a day. He acquired this wonderful spirit of prayer only by slow degrees. On entering the novitiate, he resolved to raise his heart to God seven times in the day. After some time he increased this number of ejaculations to one hundred every day, and, before the end of the novitiate, to five hundred. At last this manner of praying became so familiar to him, that the number of his ejaculations amounted to four or five thousand every day.

The saints made use of short and fervent ejaculations as one of the most efficacious means to acquire the spirit of prayer. You, too, will make great progress in this all-important virtue, provided you make use of this means as the saints did, — with fervor and perseverance.

But you will ask, How can I count my ejaculations and aspirations? It is too troublesome! I answer, If you truly love your soul you will soon find out a way to count them, just as well as a merchant knows how to count every cent he spends or receives. In order to do this, you may make use of beads after the example of St. Philip Neri, or you may count your ejaculations on your fingers, or by the hours of the day, making a stated number of them during each hour. It is advisable for you to count your ejaculations, in order to know whether you make progress in prayer. Should you have resolved to say five times in the

day the "Our Father," or "Hail Mary," or "Lord, come to my aid," or "Jesus, have mercy on me," or "Jesus, give me the spirit of prayer," or any other aspiration of the kind, be careful to do so. As soon as you have acquired a facility in making the proposed number in an hour, raise this number to ten. After having succeeded in regularly making ten an hour, increase the number again, and so on until this manner of prayer has become natural to you, and even a real want of your soul. Should you at first feel no relish in making these ejaculations, continue, nevertheless, until you have acquired the salutary habit of praying everywhere, and by degrees you will, like the saints, be raised to a higher and more perfect form of prayer and contemplation.

In order to make rapid progress in prayer, you must imitate those who are earnestly engaged in the study of sciences, or of fine arts; you will find that such persons lay aside everything that is not connected with their study. To this are directed all their thoughts and all their efforts, by day and by night. Now if you wish to acquire the spirit of prayer in a short time, you, too, must lay aside everything that could hinder you in acquiring this spirit. Give up useless visits, vain and dangerous amusements. You must bid farewell to the ball room and the theatre; you must cast aside those sentimental novels and silly love stories. If you wish to make rapid progress in the spirit of prayer, you must practise selfdenial; you must repress your inordinate inclinations. You must detach your heart from the comforts and pleasures of this life; you must not seek the praise of men, nor desire to do your own will in everything. You must mortify that idle curiosity which prompts you to see and hear everything that passes around you. As long as you do not strive earnestly to detach your

heart from everything in this world, you will always have to complain of coldness in prayer, and even of great repugnances to the practices of devotion. You cannot gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. As you sow, you shall reap. If the wheat which you put into the mill be worthless, so also will the flour which comes from the mill be worthless. Your heart will be where your treasure is, says our Lord in the Gospel. The devil is well aware of this truth. In order to prevent you from praying, he will place before your mind, when you are engaged in prayer, those objects to which you are most attached.

We have a beautiful example of detachment in the Count Rougemont, of whom St. Vincent de Paul relates the following: "I knew," he says, "in the Province of Bresse, the Chevalier Rougemont, who, in his duels, had wounded and killed an almost incredible number. After his conversion to a very edifying life, I had the pleasure of visiting him at his own residence; he began to speak to me about his devout exercises and practices of virtue, and, among others, of trying to acquire a complete detachment from creatures. "I feel assured," said he to me, "that if I am perfectly detached from creatures, I will be most perfectly united to my Lord and God; for this reason I often examine my conscience to see whether I entertain some attachment, either to myself, or to my relatives, friends or neighbors; or to the riches and comforts of life, or to any passion or disorderly desire whatsoever that might prevent me from being perfectly united to God, and resting entirely in him alone. I begin to pray to God, to enable me to root out at once whatever I notice to be an obstacle to my perfect union with him."

"I remember," continues St. Vincent de Paul, "a remarkable act of this Count, which he himself related to me,

and which shows how earnestly he went to work to gain a complete detachment from everything; an act which I can never think of without admiration. "One day," he said to me, "I was riding along on horseback. I stopped to make an offering of myself to God. After this I reflected to find out whether there was still something left to which I might have at least some trivial attachment. After having carefully examined all my occupations, recreations, honors, and even the least affections and inclinations of my heart, I found out that I entertained still some affection for the sword which I wore at my side. Why do you wear this sword? I said to myself. But what evil has it done you? Leave it where it is! It has rendered you many great services; it has enabled you to save yourself in thousands of dangers. Should you again be attacked without it, surely you would be lost; but should you fall out again with your neighbor, would you have sufficient self-command to leave it where it is, and not offend God again? My God! what must I do? Shall I still love the instrument of my confusion, and of so many sins? Alas! I see my heart is yet attached to this miserable instrument! This said, I alighted from my horse, took a stone, and broke my sword into pieces. After this victory over myself I felt completely detached from everything, caring no more for anything in this world, and feeling most powerfully drawn to love God above all things." "Behold, gentlemen," said St. Vincent, "behold how happy we should be, and what progress we should make in virtue, if, like this nobleman, we would purify our hearts from all earthly affections. If our hearts were completely detached from all creatures, how soon would our souls be united to God!"

Your facility in prayer, and your attraction for it, will increase in proportion to the efforts you make to detach

yourself from all earthly things, especially from yourself. One day Christopher Gonzalve, S. J., a disciple of blessed Balthazar Alvarez, was asked by one of his fellow-students to tell him by what means he had obtained the extraordinary gift of prayer. He answered: "This did not cost me very much; I had only to follow the inspiration of God, to mortify and renounce entirely my desire of vain glory in scientific matters. I began my philosophical studies with an unusual facility. I gained great preeminence over all my companions. This superiority of talent was a strong lever to ambition, and a source of constant temptation to me. In order to escape these dangerous snares the more securely, I felt inspired to adopt the following means, without, however, neglecting my studies: to cause my companions to lose the high opinion they entertained of my superior talents, I often asked them an explanation of certain points which I understood, perhaps, better than they did. In controversies, I simply gave my opinion, but appeared to be at a loss how to corroborate it; when objections were made, I answered the first, but for the second I pretended to have no answer: the consequence was that my professors and fellow-students lost the good opinion they had conceived of my talents, and that my professors gave the most difficult and most honorable theses to others, and to me only such as were very easy, and not productive of any honor. Now this was exactly what I desired and aimed at; for I thus gained a complete victory over self-love and ambition, in recompense for which God bestowed upon me the inestimable gift of sublime contemplation, and great familiarity with him in prayer."

Thus is true what the Lord said of the Prophet Isaias: "If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy own will . . . thou shalt be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up

above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob, thy father. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaias, lviii. 13, 14.) Now this promise of the Lord will come true in your regard, also, provided you comply with the conditions, namely, to purify your heart from all attachment to earthly enjoyments, ambitions, and desires, but especially from all attachment to your own will and judgment. "Yes," says St. Francis de Sales, "God is ready to grant you the gift of prayer, as soon as he sees you empty of your own self-will. If you be very humble, he will not fail to pour it out upon your soul. God will fill your vessel with his ointments, as soon as it is empty of the ointments of this world; that is, as soon as every desire of yours for earthly objects has made room for that of serving and loving him alone."

The use of frequent and fervent ejaculatory prayers, and the complete detachment of your heart from all creatures, are, it is true, a most powerful means to acquire the spirit of prayer. But in order the more quickly to obtain this inexpressible gift, you must frequently beg it of God; for this grace of prayer is, as St. Francis de Sales assures us, no water of this earth, but of heaven. Therefore you cannot obtain it by any effort of your own, although it be true that you should carefully dispose yourself for the reception of this grace. This care should indeed be great, but humble and calm. You must keep your heart open, waiting for the fall of this heavenly dew, which will fall so much the sooner, the more earnestly and perseveringly you pray and sigh for it every day, especially when you attend the divine Sacrifice of Mass, or receive Holy Communion, and visit our most loving Lord in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. Then you must say to him: "Lord, teach me how to pray. Grant me the spirit of prayer, and a great

love for this holy exercise. Make me often think of thee, and find my greatest pleasure and happiness in conversing with thee; let everything of this world become disgustful to me."

The more frequently and earnestly you make these, or similar petitions, to obtain the spirit of prayer, the more you will receive of this inestimable gift of the Lord, according to the infallible promise of Jesus Christ: "All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi. 22.) Continue thus to ask, until the Lord will accomplish in you what he has promised by the Prophet Zacharias: "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers." (Chap. xii. 10.) You clearly perceive, from these words of the prophet, that this gift of prayer is the spirit and gift of the Lord. You must, then, endeavor to obtain it more by asking it of the Lord with great humility, fervor, confidence, and perseverance, than by imprudent efforts of the brain and mind.

Wait patiently for the hour, but do not neglect to do, at the same time, what has been said in this chapter, and then rest assured that the moment will come in which the conversation with God will be easier to you than the conversation with your most intimate friend; and you will exclaim with St. Augustine: "What is more excellent, more profitable, more sublime, and sweeter for the soul, than prayer." You will, with Father Sanchez and Suarez, of the Society of Jesus, prefer the loss of all temporal goods to one hour of prayer, for then will be realized in you what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans: "The spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (Chap. viii. 26.) Then the

Holy Ghost himself will pray in you and with you, inspiring such petitions and sighs as are pleasing to and heard by him. And when the Lord, in his great mercy, has granted you this admirable gift, daily return him thanks for it, and profit by it, both for your own temporal and spiritual welfare, and that of others.

Say often with the Psalmist: "Take not thy holy spirit from me." (Ps. 1. 13.) Lord, never withdraw from me this spirit of grace and prayer; send me any other punishment for my sins rather than this. I repeat again, never forget to be thankful for this gift, always remembering that you can never fully understand or sufficiently appreciate it until after death. In this gift are included all the gifts and graces of the Lord. Be therefore very desirous to obtain it, and take every possible means to acquire it. You should not take less pains, care and trouble, or make less efforts to obtain this great gift from God, than a good student does to learn a language, an architect to erect a costly and splendid edifice, or a general to gain the victory in an important battle. Would to God you understood this great and inestimable grace as perfectly and clearly as the devil does! I think you would take as much trouble to acquire it, and to preserve it when acquired, as he does to prevent you from receiving it, and to make you lose it when you are in its possession.

This sworn arch-enemy of our eternal happiness will suffer you to perform any kind of good works, such as fasting, scourging yourself, wearing haircloth, etc., rather than see you striving to advance in prayer; the least time you spend in it is for him an insupportable torment. Although he leaves you quiet at all other times, rest assured that in the time of prayer he will use all his power to distract and disturb you in some way or other. In order

to prevent you from praying well, he will fill your mind with thoughts and imaginations of the strangest and most curious kind. Things that you never think of at any other time will come to your mind at the time of prayer. You will think that you came to prayer for no other purpose than to be distracted and assaulted by a whole army of the most frightful temptations. Satan will make you feel peevish, and try to persuade you that prayer is the business of old women who have nothing else to do, but that for you it is only a loss of time which could be spent much more profitable in some other way.

If you are a priest, a religious, or a student of theology, he will artfully represent to you how necessary and profitable it is to possess great learning, for the salvation of souls and the greater honor and glory of God, in order that the application to study may become your principal occupation, and that you may consider prayer as something merely accessory. If a superior in a conference, a confessor in the confessional, or a priest in a sermon, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, his apostles, and all the saints, and in accordance with the spirit of the Church, repeatedly insists upon the necessity of prayer, the devil will not be slow to suggest: Oh, that superior, that priest, knows but one rule, but one obligation. He does not care for science, or consider the country and times in which we are living. If you do what he says you will never be anything but a real hypocrite and devotee.

Should this malignant enemy not succeed by these and similar artifices to prevent certain souls from praying he will then try other means. To St. Anthony the hermit, when at prayer, he used to appear under the most hideous forms, to frighten him. He sometimes seized St. Frances of Rome, shook her, and threw her on the ground. When

St. Rose of Lima was at prayer, the devil would come and make a great noise, by taking hold of a basket and jumping about with it. He would often cast large hail-stones upon the two holy brothers Simplician and Roman when they knelt down to pray, in order to make them give up prayer, as is related by St. Gregory of Tours.

This implacable hatred and incessant war of Satan against prayer should alone be sufficient to convince you of the necessity, importance, utility and sublimity of this holy exercise; and at the same time urge you to apply to it with all possible diligence, that you may the sooner acquire the spirit of prayer. Read the life of the seraphic St. Teresa, that great mistress of prayer, and you will find how she struggled for eighteen years to obtain this spirit of prayer. We read of St. Catharine of Bologna, that when she was Abbess, one of her daughters, seeing that her whole time was taken up with business, or by the intercourse she was obliged to have with the servants and strangers, asked her how, with her weak health, she could endure so many fatigues and cares. "Know, my daughter," replied the holy Mother, "and be assured that my mind is so occupied with the things which are not of this world, that at whatever hour or moment I wish, I am immediately united with God and separated from everything bodily and temporal. I confess that this has cost me innumerable sufferings, for the road of virtue is narrow and hard; but, by perseverance, prayer has become my life, my nurse, my mistress, my consolation, my refreshment, my rest, my fortune, all my wealth. It is prayer that has preserved me from mortal sins and rescued me from death; but it has done more than that: it has nourished me as a tender mother nourishes her infant with milk. I ought to add, too, that prayer drives away all distractions and tempta-

tions, gives us the desire of doing penance, enkindles in us the divine love, and, finally, that there is no surer road to perfection."

All the saints, were they to come down from heaven, would, with St. Catharine of Bologna, make the same acknowledgment. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those that use this holy violence will bear it away. Let us, like the saints, use this salutary coercion in regard to ourselves; it will prove to us a source of joy for all eternity. Let us, in imitation of the saints, often read a chapter on the great necessity, importance, advantages and efficacy of prayer, thereby to encourage ourselves constantly to persevere and increase in fervent love for this holy occupation. Let us be firmly convinced that such reading will be more profitable to us than any other, whatever it may be. Let us, also, often make our particular examen of conscience on this subject, and let us firmly believe to be true what I one day heard said by a very holy priest, who was so much given to prayer as to be often elevated in the air whilst engaged in devotion. "Any one," said he, "who would carefully make his particular examen of conscience for half a year, would not fail to attain to contemplation."

Suppose the Lord would not favor you in prayer as he has favored certain saints, yet be convinced you will always receive far more than you deserve; do what you can, and leave it to him to do with you according to his will. "He hath filled the hungry with good things," exclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Lord not only gives, but overloads with his gifts those who have a real desire for them. Join the deed to your desires for them, by making use of the means here laid down to acquire them, and rest assured God will deal with you in a most

liberal manner, in accordance with the promptness of his paternal heart. You will experience what one of my fellow-students has experienced, who said to me one day: "Since I have given myself up to holy prayer, I am quite a different creature." Would to God you did truly relish all that has been said!

If you but knew the gift of God, you would soon see how sweet the Lord is to those who are given to prayer. You will most assuredly find him in this holy exercise, for he opens to those who knock, and gives to those that ask. Give it a fair trial. Say with David, "One thing I have asked of the Lord; this will I seek after," (Ps. xxvi. 4.) namely, this gift of prayer, and I will ask for it until it shall be granted to me.

CHAPTER X.

Powerful Motive to Practise what has been said in the preceding Chapter.

We have seen, in a preceding chapter, that prayer changes sinners from enemies of God into his friends; from reprobates into chosen vessels of election; from followers of the devil into children of God; from heirs to hell into heirs to heaven.

Now, if prayer opens to sinners the road to heaven; if it produces effects so wonderful in their souls, how much more wonderful must not be the transformations which it brings about in the souls of the just! To give a full and accurate description of these effects is utterly impossible; no human eye ever saw them, nor did any human understanding ever fully comprehend them. Could they be seen or understood, the whole world would covet them, and regard all else as vanity, and unworthy of man's ambition.

Now let me enumerate some of these wonderful effects of prayer. Many are the evil tendencies from which the sacred waters of baptism do not free the soul, and many are the blemishes which still tarnish the soul, even after the remission of grievous sins in the sacrament of Penance; there remain, for the soul, temporal punishments to be cancelled; there remain in the soul a certain lassitude, inconstancy and discouragement in combating the temptations of the devil, of the world and of the flesh. There also remain in it a certain proneness to, and affection for the vanities of the world, a sovereign horror of suffering, of

contempt, and the like. Now prayer removes these blemishes from the soul in proportion as it gives itself up to this holy exercise. "Although we may be filled with sins," says St. John Chrysostom, "yet, if we continue to pray, we shall soon be quite free from them;" that is to say, not only free from sin itself, but also from the temporal punishments due to them; "for," continues the saint, "no sooner had the leper prostrated himself at the feet of our Lord than he was perfectly cleansed from his leprosy."

In prayer God enlightens us. He shows us how good he has always been to us, and how wicked we were towards him. Seeing this goodness of God, and our own ingratitude towards him, we begin to repent more perfectly. If, in the first instant of our conversion, we repented from the imperfect motive of having deserved hell, we now begin to repent rather from the motive of the love of God. We weep over our sins. We conceive a great hatred of the least sin. We even shudder at the very name of sin. We feel penetrated with the spirit of penance, and are ready to accept any kind of trouble and hardship, thereby to satisfy the justice of God. Now St. Ambrose assures us, "that, if the love of God has once entered into the soul, it is like a fire, that destroys everything that comes within its reach; the love of God effaces every spot and stain of sin in the soul." Witness the good thief on the cross, who heard these consoling words from the lips of our Lord, as a response to his earnest petition: "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

Moreover, prayer inspires us with courage to combat all our enemies, and to endure patiently every cross and trial. From being weak, we become strong; from being indolent and slothful, we become fervent and enterprising; from being perplexed, we become enlightened; from being

melancholy and cast down, we become joyful; from being effeminate, we become manful. It is from the tower of prayer that Esther comes forth courageous to brave the orders of Assuerus; Judith to face Holofernes; a small number of the Machabees to set their numerous enemies at defiance. Fortified by prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ goes to meet his enemies who are to crucify him.

In prayer we are raised above ourselves to our God in heaven, where we see the vanity of all earthly things, and despise them as mere trifles. In prayer we discover that only in heaven true riches, honors, and pleasures are to be found. "If we give ourselves up to prayer," says St. John Chrysostom, "we shall soon cease to be mortals, not, indeed, by nature, but by our holy manner of thinking, speaking, and acting, for, those who enter into familiarity with God, must necessarily become raised above everything transitory and perishable." And: "How great a dignity is it not," continues the saint, "to be allowed to converse with God. By prayer we are united with the angelic choirs, who, lost in the contemplation of God, teach us how to forget ourselves whilst at prayer, so that, being penetrated with seraphic happiness and reverential awe at the same time, we may be lost to everything earthly, believing ourselves standing among the angels, and offering, with them, the same sacrifice. How great is the wisdom, how great the piety, how great the holiness, how great the temperance with which prayer fills us! Hence it is not the slightest deviation from truth to maintain that prayer is the source of all virtues; so much so that nothing tending to nourish piety can enter the soul without its practice." (Lib. 2, De Orando.)

In prayer the soul is enlightened as to the manner in which all the crosses and sufferings of this world, poverty,

sickness, hunger and thirst, privations of all kinds, persecutions, contempt, mockeries, insults, and whatever may be repugnant to human nature, are to be counted as nothing; and, according to St. Paul, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) In prayer it is that we learn to exclaim with St. Andrew, the Apostle: "O, thou good cross which hast received thy splendor from the members of Jesus Christ, for which I have been sighing so long, which I have always loved so ardently, and which finally has been prepared for me! Oh, come and present me to my Master, so that he may receive me by thee, who by thee redeemed me!"

We read that the first Christians and many martyrs suffered with joy the loss of all their temporal goods, even life itself. One day one of our Fathers dined with an old venerable priest. Whilst sitting at table, he noticed protuberances of flesh on each side of the aged priest's hands. Not knowing how to account for them, he asked him for an explanation. The venerable priest explained to him as follows: "When the slaughter of priests," said he, "was going on by wholesale, during the French Revolution, I tried to escape death by hiding myself in a rack of hay, but I was discovered by an officer who came and probed the rack with his sword, and pierced my hands which were lying crosswise. I was taken to prison to be executed next day. Never in my life did I experience such agony, deadly fear; never did I understand more clearly what our dear Saviour suffered in the garden of Gethsemani than I did at that time. According to the example of my divine Redeemer I began to pray, and prayed until three o'clock in the morning. Suddenly I felt so great a comfort, consolation and courage that I even sighed after the hour of

my execution. "Would to God they were coming!" I exclaimed with a deep sigh. At last the door of the prison was thrown open. "There they are," I said, "thanks be to God; now I am going to die for Jesus Christ. But, alas! my exceedingly great joy was instantly changed into an excess of grief. I was told that I was not to be executed, but set at liberty." Thus prayer changed this priest's sadness into joy, his cowardice into intrepidity, his horror of torture into a longing desire for the most exquisite torments.

Prayer, moreover, unites the soul to God in a most wonderful manner. This union is much stronger, more solid, more intimate, than the best kind of cement is capable of producing between two stones. Physical force can separate the latter; the former is incapable of dissolution by any natural power whatever. "He who is joined to the Lord," says St. Paul, "is one spirit." (I. Cor. vi. 17.) To be given to prayer, and to be joined to God, is one and the same thing.

As one who frequently enjoys the company of a wise, prudent, and learned man, whom he truly loves and esteems, will, by degrees, adopt his manner and his way of speaking, judging, and acting, so a soul which converses often and long with God in prayer, will gradually receive more and more of his divine attributes. "We feel so strongly united to God," says St. Bernard, "that we wish only what God wishes; nay, we are so disposed that we cannot wish except what God wishes; but to wish what God wishes is already to be like unto God. Now not to be able to will anything save what God wills, is to be what God is, with whom to will and to be is but one and the same. Hence it is said, with truth, that we shall see him then such as he is. Now, if we have thus become like unto

him, we shall be what he himself is; for to whomsoever power is given to become the children of God, power is also given, not indeed to be God themselves, but to be what God is." (St. Bern. or Auct. Tract. De Vita Solitar.)

St. Francis of Assisi, when at prayer, was oftentimes rapt in ecstasy, and, regardless of earth and the love of created things, he would exclaim, in a transport of delight: "My God and my all! my God and my all! Let me die for the love of thee, who hast died for the love of me!"

Hence that brilliant light ever beaming on the countenances of holy men when returning from fervent prayer and familiar intercourse with God. "And when Moses came down from Mount Sinai... he knew not that his face was horned, from the conversation of the Lord." (Exodus xxxiv. 29.)

Those who are devoted to prayer, and frequent conversation with God, become like unto Moses, whose brow was resplendent with a supernatural light. This brilliancy is first visible on their countenance, whence it extends to the whole body. Thus Jesus Christ was transfigured in prayer, and his face did shine as the sun; so much so, that this light was not only reflected upon Moses and Elias, but also upon St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, in which light St. Peter, inebriated with joy, exclaims: "Lord, it is good for us to be here, if thou wilt let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Thus also the face of St. Anthony, who often spent whole nights in prayer, was resplendent to such a degree, that by the splendor, radiance, and joy on his countenance, he could be recognized at once among many thousands of his brethren, like a sun among many stars. Thus, too, St. Francis of Assisi whilst elevated in spirit to heaven in

the act of fervent prayer, was radiant with light, and seemed to send forth fiery flames. In the breviary, we read that the face of St. Stanislaus Koska was always inflamed, nay, sometimes, even beaming, with divine light.

Thus, also, the countenance of the Blessed Virgin Mary shone constantly, and in an especial manner, with heavenly light, on account of her perpetual union with God and the Incarnate Word; and such was its dazzling splendor, that, according to the testimony of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, she seemed to be a goddess.

Now these beams radiated in the shape of horns, to signify that the saints were not only enlightened in prayer, but became also *cornuti*; *i. e.* horned: namely, constant, firm, strong, intrepid, and capable of undergoing every suffering, and of enduring all kinds of hardships.

Thus Anna, the mother of Samuel, felt great strength and courage after her prayer. (I. Kings, i. 18.) "And her countenance," says Holy Writ, "was no more changed"; that is, she obtained such strength in prayer, that she bore with an even mind both the praises of Helcana and the contempt and mockery of Phenanna; consolations and prosperity, as well as desolations and adversities.

Finally, prayer introduces the soul into the happy country of interior life, a country that overflows with milk and honey. Here the soul learns more of God in one moment, than if it read all the books in the world. God speaks to the soul, and the soul to God, in an inexplicable manner, enkindling in it that strong, ardent and seraphic love for himself, which made St. Paul exclaim: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulations? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? (As it is written: For thy sake we are put to death all the day long: we are accounted

as sheep for the slaughter.)” (Rom. viii. 35, 36.) “Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. We are reviled we are persecuted we are blasphemed; we are made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring of all, even until now.” (I. Corinth. iv. 11, 13.) “Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation; combats without; fears within;” (II. Corinth. vii. 5.) “in many labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depths of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren, in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and in nakedness.” (II. Cor. xi. 23, 28.) “We glory in tribulations.” (Rom. v. 3.) “I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly bound with joy in all our tribulations.” (II. Cor. vii. 4.) “In all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. viii. 37, 39.)

What is there, then, that cannot be obtained through prayer? “All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” (Matt. xxi. 22.) Now, he who says all things, excepts nothing. Nay, God is so good, so liberal, says Origen, (Hom. 9, in Numer.) that he gives more than he is asked for. The Holy Church, too, ex-

presses this when she prays: "O God, who, in the abundance of thy kindness, *exceedest both the merits and wishes of thy suppliants*, pour forth upon us thy mercy, that thou mayest free us from those things which burden our conscience, and mayest grant us what we dare not ask."

Let us rest assured that he who understands how to pray well, becomes, as it were, the lord of the Lord, and the ruler of the universe. He is another Jacob, who, having overcome the Lord in wrestling (in prayer), was called Israel, that is, the conqueror of God. "If you can," says Cornelius à Lapidè, "reason with God effectually in prayer, he will change your enemies at once into your friends; for the hearts even of the most ferocious are in the hands of the Lord; he can change them at his own good pleasure." "If thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men!" (Gen. xxxii. 28.) Indeed, whomsoever the Creator himself obeys, the angels, the demons, men, and all creatures, are bound to obey.

We read in Holy Scripture (Exod. xxxii. 20.) that the Jews, notwithstanding the astounding miracles which God had wrought in their behalf when freeing them from the galling yoke of Egyptian tyranny, had fallen into the most heinous crime of idolatry. Exasperated at this most provoking offence, the Lord resolved to blot out this ungrateful people from the face of the earth. He was on the point of pouring out his wrath upon them, when Moses, the holy and faithful servant of God, the leader of the Israelites, interceded for them, and by dint of earnest entreaty, arrested the arm of God uplifted to smite this ungrateful people. "Let me alone," said the Lord to Moses, "that my wrath may be enkindled against them, and that I may destroy them."

Behold the struggle between an angry God and his sup-

pliant servant; between justice and prayer. "Let me alone," says the Lord, "let me destroy this ungrateful people, and I will make thee the leader of a great nation." Now as St. Jerome (In Ezech. chap. xiii.) remarks, "he who says to another: 'Let me alone,' evidently shows that he is subject to the power of another."

But Moses would not yield; on the contrary, he confidently entreated the Lord to pardon the Jews: "Why, O Lord," he asked, "is thy indignation aroused against thy people, whom thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand? Let not the Egyptians boast, I beseech thee: he craftily brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and efface them from the earth: let thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the waywardness of thy people." Now what was the issue of this struggle between the justice of God and the confident prayer of Moses? God yielded, at last, to the power of the prayer of Moses; for "the Lord was appeased," says Holy Scripture, "and did not the evil which he had spoken against his people."

Something similar took place at the time of the prophet Jeremias. Again the Jews had committed atrocious crimes, and the wrath of the Lord was enkindled anew. Again he resolved to reject and destroy them: "And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren." (Isaias, vii. 15.) Before inflicting this punishment, the Lord entreated his servant Jeremias not to intercede in behalf of the victims of his just indignation. "Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take unto thee praise and supplication for them, and *do not withstand me*; (Verse 16.) for if thou dost, the Lord means to say, I shall not be able to pour out my wrath upon this people.

Again, God visited this perverse people with a destruc-

tive fire in punishment of their sins. Great, indeed, must have been the anger of God to send this frightful plague; yet still greater was the power of Aaron's prayer, since it prevailed on the Lord to quench the fire instantly. Moses said to Aaron: "Take the censer, and putting the fire in it from the altar, put incense upon it, and go quickly to the people to pray for them, for already wrath is gone out from the Lord, and the plague rageth." (Numbers xvi. 46.) "And Aaron, the blameless man," says Holy Writ, "made haste to pray for the people, bringing forth the shield of his ministry — prayer — and by incense making supplication, *withstood the wrath and put an end to the calamity, showing that he was thy servant.*" (Wisdom xviii. 21.) Thus Aaron checked the devouring flame, which had already consumed fourteen thousand and seventy men; he checked it not indeed by water, but by placing himself between the living and the dead, offering fervent prayer to the Lord. "And standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased." (Num. xvi. 48.)

We read in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, (Chap. xlv. 17.) that God, on account of the prayer of Noah, put an end to the deluge, and saved in him and his family the whole human race. "Noah was found perfect, just." Hence it was that he could appease the wrath of God: "And in the time of wrath, he was made a reconciliation."

What made Attila, the scourge of God, retreat so suddenly, and give up his plan of invading Italy? It was the prayer of the Pope St. Leo, in deference to which God sent so great a consternation upon Attila; that he felt himself forced to withdraw. What put an effectual check to the ravages at the time of St. Gregory? It was the fervent prayer of this saint. Do we not come across similar examples in almost all the lives of the saints? The hands of God are,

then, so to speak, bound by the prayer of men of great sanctity; but God feels free to act, if such men cannot be found. He himself has declared by the prophet Ezechie: (Chap. xxii. 30.) "And I sought among them a man that might set up a hedge and stand in the gap before me in favor of the land, that I might not destroy it; and I found none. And I poured out my indignation upon them; in the fire of my wrath I consumed them."

The terrible fate of Sodom, as related in the Book of Genesis, is an evident proof of this truth. No sooner had Abraham learned that God intended to destroy this city with its inhabitants, than he commenced to intercede for it, saying to the Lord: "Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked? If there be fifty just men in the city, shall they perish withal? and wilt thou not spare that place for the sake of the fifty just, if they be therein? Far be it from thee to do this thing, and to slay the just with the wicked, and for the just to be in like case with the wicked, this is not beseeming thee: Thou who judgest all the earth, wilt not make this judgment." And the Lord said to him: "If I find in Sodom fifty just within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." And Abraham answered and said: "Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes. What if there be five less than fifty just persons? wilt thou for five and forty destroy the whole city? And he said: I will not destroy it if I find five and forty. And again he said to him: But if forty be found there, what wilt thou do? He said: I will not destroy it for the sake of forty. Lord, saith he, be not angry, I beseech thee, if I speak: What if thirty shall be found there? He answered: I will not do it if I find thirty there. Seeing, saith he, I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord: What if twenty be found there? He said: I will

not destroy it for the sake of twenty. I beseech thee, saith he, be not angry, Lord, if I speak yet once more: What if ten should be found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." (Gen. xvii. 23-32.)

And the Lord departed, fearing, as it were, Abraham might ask him to spare the city if but four, or three, or even one just soul could be found there; for there was that number to be found there, viz.: Lot, his wife, and two children. But in order that Lot and his family might not perish with the rest, God, through the ministry of his angels, led them out of the city. But had the Lord found there but ten just men, surely he would have spared the city. Nay, at the time of Jeremias God declared, through this prophet, that he would be propitious to the city of Jerusalem, if but one man eminently just could be found therein. "Go about through the streets of Jerusalem and see, and consider, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment and seeketh faith, *and I will be merciful unto it.*" (Jeremias v. 1.) God seeks men to whom may be applied what is said of St. John the Baptist: "He was great before the Lord;" that is, great with God by holiness of life, and by the power of prayer.

Such was St. Athanasius, who for God and for the sake of religion opposed the dreadful heresy of Arius, and triumphed over it. Such were St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, who, to the end of their lives, fought the battles of the Lord. In what great esteem must the just be held, though despicable and wretched exteriorly, because, for their sake, God spares whole cities sunk in vice; they are the stays and pillars of realms. Such was David, of whom God said to Ezechias: "I will protect this city, and will save it for my own sake, and *for David, my servant's sake.*" (IV. Kings xix. 34.)

Such was St. Paul, to whom, when in danger of shipwreck, the Angel of the Lord said: "Fear not, Paul, for thou must be brought before Cæsar; and behold, God hath given thee all that sail with thee." (Acts xxxii. 24.) "God," says Cornelius à Lapide, "values one just man more than a thousand sinners, than heaven and earth;" "nay," says St. Alphonsus, "God esteems one eminently just man more than a thousand ordinary just men. As one sun imparts more light and warmth to the whole world than all the stars united, so, in like manner, a holy man benefits the world more than a thousand ordinary just men." "Who will call into doubt that the world is sustained by the prayers of the saints," says Ruffinus, *Præfat. in vit. Patr.*

"Oh!" says St. Gregory, "how I am grieved to the very heart when I see that God banishes holy men and women from one country into another, or summons them to himself. This is to me an evident sign that he intends to punish such a country, and this will be, indeed, very easy for him, when there is no one left to stay his anger." "The prayer of the just man," says St. Augustine, "is a key to heaven; let his prayer ascend to heaven, and God's mercy will descend on earth." (*Serm. 226, de Tempore.*)

All the just of the Old and of the New Testament employed this key of prayer very freely, to unlock God's inexhaustible treasures, and to obtain for themselves and for others whatever blessing they needed, whether temporal or spiritual. With this key the prophet Elias closed the heavens, and no rain fell for three years and a half; and with this same key he opened the heavens again, and again rain fell in abundance. With this key Ezechias brought back the shadow of the lines, by which it was gone down in the sun-dial of Achaz with the sun, ten lines backwards: "And the sun returned ten lines by the degrees by which it was gone down." (*Isaias xxxviii. 8.*)

With this key, also, Josue arrested the sun in its course, to have a longer day for gaining a complete victory over the Amorrhites: "Move not, O sun, towards Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, towards the valley of Ajalon!" (Josue x. 12.) What happened? And the sun and the moon stood still, till the people revenged themselves of their enemies. So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down the space of one day. There was not before nor after so long a day, *the Lord obeying the voice of a man.*" (Josue x. 13.) Thus Josue exercised power over the heavenly planets, suspending their revolutions, as if king thereof, and keeping them at his will.

With the key of prayer Jacob, the Nisibite, kept the gates of Nisibis closed against Sapor, and set all his schemes at naught, as Theodore writes in this Abbott's life. Bessarion the Abbott turned sea-water into sweet water. St. Raymond of Pennafort, standing on his mantle, traversed the sea for a distance of one hundred and sixty miles. The monk Publius prevented Azazel, Julian the Apostate's devil (despatched by this impious emperor to bring news from the West, as is related in Vitis Pat. Lib. 6, Tome 2, No. 12,) from proceeding farther westward than where he himself lived. St. Hilarion, Macarius, and other saints drove out the devil from possessed persons. Theonas the Abbot made robbers stand immovable. St. Gregory Thaumaturgus moved a mountain to obtain a site for a church. St. Francis of Assisium rendered a wolf quite tame and gentle. St. Alphonsus stemmed a lava-torrent of Mount Vesuvius, and turned its destructive course from the city of Naples. St. Stanislaus the Martyr restored a man to life who had died three years before, and presented him before the court to testify that he had bought from him a certain piece of ground for his church, and that he had paid him in full.

“My dear Lord,” said St. Colletta, after the death of her Prior, “give me back my Prior, for I need his aid still in erecting some more convents;” and our Lord was pleased to restore this saint — her Prior — alive; and he rendered her valuable services during the fifteen years he lived afterwards.

St. Francis de Paul, learning that his parents were to be executed for the supposed murder of a man whose body had been found in their garden, said to our Lord: “My God, let me be with my parents by to-morrow.” In the same night he was carried by an angel to his parents, at a distance of four hundred leagues. The next day he commanded the dead man, in the presence of the people, to declare whether the murder had been justly laid to the charge of his parents. “No,” said he, “your parents are guiltless.” The saint again said to the Lord: “Lord, take me to my monastery;” and the angel bore him back again.

Ah, how powerful is the prayer of the just! It not only exercises its power over all kinds of creatures, rational and irrational; over those in heaven, on earth and under the earth; it not only disarms the wrath of God against entire nations, lost to the fear and love of their Creator; it exercises even a mightier sway. It gives free access to the spiritual treasures of God; it causes them to flow in perpetual streams upon sinners, as well as upon the just, and to operate wonderful changes in their souls; it moves the hand that moves the universe. Would to God that all men understood well and practised faithfully what we have said on prayer. How happy and holy would they not become in this world, and how unspeakably elevated in glory in the next!

CHAPTER XI.

VIOLATION OF THE COMMANDMENTS.—SINS.

I. Nature of sin.

By sin is meant an offence against God, committed by a rational creature. Sometimes by the word *sin* is meant the *act of sin*, and sometimes the *state of sin*. By the *act of sin* is meant the action by which God is offended; and by the *state of sin* is meant the condition in which the soul remains after having offended God until the sin is forgiven.

There are two kinds of sin: *original sin* in which every one of us is born; and *actual* or personal sin which we ourselves commit. We have treated of original sin in the explanation of the Apostles' Creed, page 202 etc.; it is therefore actual sin only that we are going to explain here.

Sin is an act of disobedience to God, or a voluntary violation of the law of God; or, as the Catechism says, sin is a wilful offence in thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God. By the law of God is understood not only the ten commandments of God, but any precept whatsoever, given by lawful authority, which obliges in conscience like the commandments of God.

Sin is called a *voluntary* violation of the law, that is to say, a violation freely willed and freely accepted by the will. Sin, then, is committed in the following manner: (1) the forbidden object is attractively presented to the senses or the imagination; (2) the intellect perceives the

malice; (3) the will being thus enlightened upon the wickedness of the object, and free to reject and resist it, consents to it and accepts it. It is this free acceptance of the will that properly constitutes sin. Sin, therefore, is in its nature an irregularity and bad intention of the will. "The will," says St. Thomas, "is the principle of sin." Hence the saying: "The will has sinned, the will must repent."

Now, all actual or personal sins are not equally great. Some of them deprive the soul altogether of the grace and friendship of God. These are called mortal sins because, on account of their great hideousness, God withdraws from the soul sanctifying grace which is the spiritual life of the soul. There are other sins which, though displeasing to God, yet do not altogether deprive the soul of sanctifying grace. These sins are called venial, because they are more easily pardoned than mortal sins.

It is of great importance to know when we commit a mortal, and when a venial sin.

Three things are required to constitute a mortal sin:—

1. There must be sufficient matter; that is, the sinful object, or the duty which we neglect, or the precept which we violate, must be, or appear to be, something of serious importance. For example, the matter of the sin of theft is the thing stolen, which must be of some value to constitute a mortal sin; every act which shows great disrespect to God, or to the honor and worship due to God, is a mortal sin; every serious breach of the charity or justice which we owe to our neighbors or ourselves is also a mortal sin.

2. There must be clear knowledge of the malice of the act, or at least a belief or suspicion that what we are doing may be grievously wrong. With persons who are leading ordinarily good lives, that is, who are habitually disposed

rather to suffer any loss than deliberately offend God by any grievous sin, it is necessary that there should always be an actual and present advertence to the sinfulness of what they are doing, in order to constitute a mortal sin. With regard, however, to such as have wilfully destroyed the voice of their conscience, or formed for themselves a false conscience, by purposely continuing in ignorance of their duty, or by long indulgence of their passions and confirmed habits of sin, there are some writers who deny the necessity of any present or actual advertence to render their actions grievously sinful in the sight of God. Practically, however, it makes little difference whether we say that each distinct act of which they are guilty is a separate mortal sin, or whether we say they are answerable in the cause for all the sinful consequences which result from the ignorance or negligence in which they have deliberately determined to live, or from the bad habit which they have wilfully and knowingly contracted.

3. There must be full consent of the will. If as soon as we perceive that the action which we are tempted to perform is sinful, we at once reject the temptation, there is no sin. If, however, there is a half consent, it is of course wrong, both, because it is an offence against God and because of the danger to which we expose ourselves, of giving full consent; but still, so long as the consent is imperfect, the sin is only venial. This kind of half consent is not uncommon with persons who have not attained the full use of reason or who are insufficiently instructed, or who, from sudden fear, or from not being perfectly awake, or from any other cause, act without being fully conscious of what they are doing. The most difficult cases of this kind are doubts respecting sins of thought, when, from the violence of the temptation, or from want of promptness in rejecting

it in the beginning, a person knows not whether he has consented or not. The following rules will be of great service to us in forming a correct opinion.

1. In all cases of doubt, the probability is on the side of what usually happens. If a person generally yields to temptation, and makes little or no struggle to overcome it, the presumption is against him in any given case. If, however, his past experience is in his favor, if he seldom or never consents to a mortal sin, he will be right in believing that he did not yield to the temptation.

2. We may presume that there was no full consent in a case of doubt when there was nothing to hinder a person from carrying out a sinful intention, who yet has abstained from doing so.

3. It would be a clear sign that full consent had not been given if, on reflecting that the mind has been occupied with sinful thoughts, or that there is at least great danger of consent, the person is strack with fear and sorrow, and is anxious to get rid of the temptation as soon as possible.

Effects of Mortal Sin.

It is impossible for us to form an adequate idea of the enormity of mortal sin, but the consideration of some of the consequences which it entails will help us to understand its heinousness.

1. Mortal sin deprives us of all the merit of our previous good works; so that if we die with the guilt of a single mortal sin, no matter however much merit we had acquired before its commission, we shall not be rewarded for it: "All his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered" (Ezekiel xviii. 24). It is true, this merit will revive, provided we have the happiness to recover the

grace of God; but so long as the soul is stained with mortal guilt, we are deprived of all the merit of our previous good works.

2. So long as mortal sin exists in the soul, no matter what virtues we practise, we can gain no merit in the sight of God. Whatever good works we perform, we shall not be rewarded for them in heaven. These are all dead works, even if we afterwards recover grace, and die in the friendship of God. But we must not consider these virtues as useless, for in spite of the sin which is in the soul, they are still real acts of virtue; and though they will not entitle us to a reward in heaven, nor, strictly speaking, merit for us the grace of repentance, yet, in consideration of these good works, God may, by his infinite goodness and mercy, enable us once more to regain his friendship.

3. Mortal sin is so great an evil that an infinitely good, infinitely just God who delights to manifest his almighty power by forgiving and showing mercy and whose punishments fall short of our deserts, condemns every one who dies with the guilt of but one such sin to everlasting torments. Every mortal sin, then, contains so much malice that an eternity of suffering more terrible than anything we can imagine is its only adequate punishment.

Generally speaking, when a man commits a mortal sin, he is like a traveller who is walking along a lonesome road, and who takes a leap in the dark. Perhaps he is standing on the brink of a frightful precipice; perhaps that leap will be his last. So it is, usually, with one who commits a mortal sin. He does not at the time see all the fearful consequences of that one act.

Go to the penitentiary. See that young man who has been imprisoned for theft. He is perhaps a clerk or book-keeper.

Now, when he first defrauded his employer; when he committed that first mortal sin of theft he had, he will tell you, the most honorable intention. He intended to restore everything honestly. When he took that money it was perhaps to accompany a friend to the ball-room; perhaps it was to make a present to his mother or sister, or may be, to some one dearer still than mother or sister!

Ah! he took a leap in the dark. He did not then realize all the dread consequences of that one mortal sin. He did not then foresee the deceitful shifts to which he must resort, the agony of deduction, the public trial, the burning shame of a good sister, the anguish of a heart-broken mother, all his hopes of an honorable future forever blasted, and he himself condemned to herd with thieves and murderers, with felon's dress and shaven crown! Ah! no! he never thought that he could come so far!

See that wretched drunkard staggering along the street. You turn away from him now in horror and disgust. You would not allow your wife or your daughter to associate with that drunkard. And there was a time when he was pure and innocent. His cheek was once hallowed by a fond mother's kiss. Perhaps he had even the honor that angels might envy—the honor of serving the priest at the altar of God. He was once respected. He prospered in business. He had a wife and children that loved him. His home was a paradise.

But in an unhappy hour, he raised the maddening cup to his lips. It was in a moment of excessive joy or sadness; perhaps to please a friend. Ah! had you seized him then by the arm; had you said: "Beware! you will one day become a bloated outcast—your poor wife starving and your children in rags,"—he would not have believed you. He would have said: "That may happen to others, but

to me—never!” And look at him now! See how he has fallen. Speak to him of confession, of repentance, and the answer you receive is a hissing curse! Ah! he took, indeed, a leap in the dark. He did not imagine that that first mortal sin would bring him so far.

Go to the hospital, go to the bed of death. See that young man dying in the bloom of youth — he who should be the staff of his parents in their old age. Look at that living skeleton, the victim of his own guilty passions. His eyes are sunken in their sockets; his cheeks are hollow; his skin looks like parchment. With quivering lips he curses those that first led him into sin. His features are brutalized, his mind enfeebled, his health ruined; his will is powerless, his passions are ungovernable. He is tortured by shame and remorse. He tries to find pleasure in gratifying his shameful passions, and he finds only new torments. And as he looks back upon his past life — upon so many years of sin, so many hopeless struggles, so many promises made to God only to be broken, — he sinks at last into blank, moody despair! Now, when that young man first began to go with bad companions; when he first listened to immodest words; when he first looked at immodest pictures and papers — did he imagine that that first mortal sin would be so fatal to him and bring him so far? Ah no! He took a leap in the dark. He did not realize all the terrible consequences of that first mortal sin.

Look at that apostate Catholic. Once he went to mass and confession. Now he goes no longer. He will tell you that confession is good enough for women; good enough for those ignorant priest-ridden Catholics. He is more enlightened. Whence has he received this new light? What has wrought this change? Look at his face. The dignity of the free man is there no longer. He is a slave. The

oath-bound seal of hell is on his lips. One night a false friend led him to the lodge. There was a bandage on his eyes; there was a rope around his neck — and he took that oath — that terrible oath which made him a perjurer — that oath which was re-echoed in the caverns of hell.

Look at his hands, they are defiled by injustice. He has grown rich; but his riches are accursed. They are red with the blood of the poor; they are wet with the tears of the widow and the orphan.

Look at his heart. His heart is the hold of every unclean spirit. He hates the sight of the priest; the priest is the impersonation of his conscience. He hates the very name of religion. Religion appears in the midst of his sinful orgies, like the hand on the wall, writing in letters of fire the dread sentence of his condemnation. That wretched apostate tells you that there is no hell; that hell is an invention of the priests, invented to frighten old women — and yet wherever he goes there is hell. He carries an incipient hell in his heart. In the darkness and silence of the night while his wife and innocent children are sleeping around him — that apostate wretch cannot sleep. There are moments when his conscience is roused. The voice of conscience shrieks in his ear: “Ha! were you to die to-night, what would become of you? Think of eternity! Think of that *gnawing worm which never dies*, of that *fire which is never quenched*.”

No wonder, that so many bad Catholics commit suicide, even in the midst of their wealth. They can find no rest in this life, and they imagine they can find rest in the grave. Alas! there is no rest for the apostate either in this world or in the next.

Now, when that apostate Catholic first began to neglect mass and confession; when he first began to go with infidel

companions, did he really imagine, think you, that he would come so far? No, no! he took a leap in the dark. He did not see all the dread consequences of that first mortal sin.

See that unhappy woman. She has broken her plighted faith, she has grievously wronged her unsuspecting husband. See, at last her crime is made known. She has brought disgrace upon herself and her family. The finger of scorn is pointed at her. She is forever branded with the shameful name of adulteress.

Now, when she first listened to the voice of the tempter, when she first stepped aside from the path of virtue — did she then realize all the fearful consequences of her guilt? Did she realize the agony, the remorse, the deceit, the trembling fear of her whole future life? Did she realize the shame that would overwhelm her when her guilt would be revealed? Did she realize the fury of her injured husband, — the dishonor of her family, her children torn from her arms — and she herself cast aside unpitied, unloved, dying the death of an outcast or a suicide? Ah, no! she did not think that her first infidelity would lead her so far.

In all our large cities there is a place called the morgue, where the dead bodies of suicides are placed for recognition. Go to this abode of death. There you will find the corpse of a young woman that has just been dragged from the slimy flood. She is richly clad. She is beautiful yet even in death. Her long hair falls wild and dishevelled from her pale cold brow. Who is she? What is her history? Ah! it is the old, old tale. She was once pure and innocent. She was once the pride and joy of a fond mother. She received a good Catholic education. She was even brought up in the convent school. There she was a model of virtue. The gleam of purity was on her brow, the peace of God in

her heart. She knew no fear, for she knew no sin. Would to God, she had died then in her beauty and innocence! Would to God that the snow-white shroud had folded her virgin limbs ere the foul, hot breath of hell had blasted the flower of innocence that bloomed in her heart!

But the hour of temptation came—the dark dread hour which must come for us all. She quits at last the hallowed walls of the convent. She enters society. She is praised, she is flattered, she is admired. Ah, how sweet to the ear is the voice of flattery. By degrees she neglects her good resolutions: she forgets the good advices she had received in the convent; she neglects her morning prayer. Sometimes she comes late to mass and even at times loses mass altogether. She had promised the priest that she would go to confession at least once a month. Saturday comes. She does not feel like going. She hates to think of her sins, to examine her conscience. Her conscience is like a haunted house. She hates to enter into herself. So she puts off her confession to the next week. Next week she finds confession harder still. She has no pleasure in prayer, no devotion at mass, no consolation in holy communion. Her conscience upbraids her. She tries to stifle the voice of conscience. She finds more pleasure in reading some love-sick tale, of which she imagines herself the heroine. She finds more pleasure in the dance, in the sound of voluptuous music, in the honeyed words of the flatterer. Poor, unhappy girl! The eyes of a demon are upon you—a demon in human shape. He knows that youth and beauty are vain. He knows how the heart thirsts for admiration and love; and he pours into her willing ear the intoxicating tale of flattery, admiration and love! Ah! foolish girl, beware! But she heeds no warning. She has neglected to pray. She has neglected the sacraments. She is weak,

and at last she falls! O God, how deep, how terrible is that fall! She loses that priceless jewel, her greatest ornament and treasure!

Ah! now comes the shame, the bitter remorse. The devil who lured her on, now tears the bandage from her eyes. He whispers in her ear that there is no happiness for her any more in this life, no hope, no forgiveness. The infamous wretch who betrayed her, who had vowed eternal friendship to her — ah! see, how he now abandons her. He loathes her; he casts her away as a thing unclean! Ah! wicked young man, infamous seducer, what have you done? You have violated the temple of God; you have ruined a soul for which Jesus died. Woe to you, heartless wretch! the blood of that murdered soul is upon your guilty head!

Ah! now the unhappy victim of sin can find no rest. She has not the courage to cast herself into the arms of her mother. She fears to return to her home, lest her guilty presence should pollute that abode of peace. She has not the courage to cast herself at the feet of the priest and confess her crime. Terror and despair are weighing on her heart. Her life is a burden. She is resolved to end it. She hastens to the river. It is night and the stars look mildly down and seem to reproach that erring soul. She shudders as she gazes on the cold, dark flood before her. She hesitates, but it is only for a moment. Shame and despair urge her on, and she plunges into the river. She sinks beneath the waves and her murdered soul sinks beneath the dark burning waves of hell!

Ah! could that lost soul stand before you, she could tell you, with a wild shriek of despair, the dread consequences of sin.

(See "Prodigal Son" Chapter v. p. 62.)

But though mortal sin is so great an evil, and though

some mortal sins are far more grievous than others, there is no sin, however enormous, which may not be forgiven. When our Blessed Lord promised his Apostles the power of forgiving sins, he made no limitation or exception. His word is pledged to ratify in heaven the sentence which they should pronounce upon earth: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (St. Matt. xviii. 18.) "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (St. John xx. 23.) However black, therefore, has been the guilt of the sinner, the Church has received power to forgive him, provided he be truly penitent: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep my commandments, and do judgment, and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done: in his justice which he hath wrought he shall live." (Ezechieh xviii. 21, 22.) If there are certain passages of Holy Scripture which at first sight would seem to imply that there are some sins which cannot be forgiven, no more is meant than that there is a special malice in these sins which makes their forgiveness very difficult. "The blasphemy of the Spirit," which our Lord tells us shall not be forgiven, (St. Matt. xii. 31.) refers, according to the explanation of the best interpreters, to the sin of the Pharisees in resisting the plain truth, and attributing the manifest miracles of Christ to the devil. This was a sin of malice and is therefore said to be against the Holy Ghost, to whom goodness is specially attributed; as sins of ignorance are said to be against the Son, to whom wisdom or knowledge is ascribed, and sins of infirmity are said to be against the Father, whose characteristic attribute is power.

Venial Sin.

Every actual sin which does not contain the three conditions necessary to make a mortal sin is a venial sin.

1. Thus, if the matter be small, the sin is only venial. It will, of course, be understood, that circumstances sometimes quite change the nature of the case, and make a serious matter of what is usually of small moment. Thus, to take an apple contrary to the divine command not to steal, would be only a venial sin; but when our first parents took the forbidden fruit, they committed a mortal sin, because God had expressly chosen this prohibition to test their submission to him, and had distinctly told them that death would be the penalty of their disobedience. Again, he who erroneously believed the matter to be great, and so did what he thought to be a great offence against God, would commit a mortal sin; because the greatness of the matter of a sin, considered in the person who commits it, must be estimated, not simply by what it is in its own nature, but by what it is believed to be in the mind of that person.

2. If there be no knowledge, nor suspicion that the thing which we are doing is wrong, there is no sin; and if the knowledge be imperfect, the sin is only venial. This, as already explained, will often be the case with those who have not fully come to the use of reason, or are imperfectly instructed, or who are only half conscious of what they are doing.

3. The sin is only venial when the consent of the will is imperfect. This has been already explained in what has been said on the conditions which are required to constitute a mortal sin.

We may now easily understand the four ways in which a venial sin is sometimes said to become mortal. 1. When

a person commits a venial sin with such an affection to it that he is resolved to commit it even if it were mortal. 2. When the end for which it is done is a mortal sin. In both these cases, it is not so much the act which is performed, as the evil disposition of the heart, and the bad intention accompanying the act, which constitute the mortal sin. 3. When a person perceives that by committing a venial sin he will give occasion to a mortal sin, by scandal or any other way. Here the circumstance that we know that our action will be the occasion of a great sin in another, makes the matter grievous which would otherwise be small, 4. When a person commits that which is in itself only a venial sin, and yet thinks in his conscience it is a mortal sin. It has already been stated, that in judging of past sins we must estimate the matter not by what it is in its own nature, but by what it was conceived to be by the person at the time the act was performed.

Effects of Venial Sin.

Venial sin disfigures the soul — the image and likeness of God. It is to the soul what leprosy is to the body. Leprosy does not kill the body, but makes it look very ugly and frightful. In like manner, venial sin does not kill the soul, but makes it look very ugly and horrifying.

Venial sin obscures the understanding. Blindness does not kill a man, but prevents him from seeing the beauties of this world. In like manner, venial sin does not deprive the soul of its spiritual life — the grace of God, but blinding the soul as it does, it prevents the soul from seeing well the things of God, or what is good for itself. I tell a person who commits venial sins wilfully, that there is danger of falling into sin if he goes into such and such company. He answers, "I do not see any danger." I tell him that he

should go oftener to Mass, to confession, to holy communion: He answers, "I do not see the good of it." He stumbles about in his blindness, and he is in danger of falling into mortal sin.

Venial sin weakens *the will*, excites the passions, inflames concupiscence; it takes from the will the fear of God, robs it of his presence, chills its love, renders it weak and languishing, and deprives it of all relish for devotion. What wonder, then, that being reduced to this state, it should fall into great sins, that God now treats it with more coldness, and the devil is permitted to tempt it with greater power?

Grace and mortal sin are the two extremes; one passes from one to the other only through venial sin. A small leak is enough to cause a vessel to sink. A single spark is enough to set fire to a forest. One evil thought is enough to kill the soul if the soul is not prompt enough in stifling it. All beginnings are small, but their results are great. A river at its source is a mere thread of water which makes its way along with much difficulty, but from the discharge of other streams, it becomes in its progress a great and rapid torrent, which inundates lands and sweeps away many houses.

Our soul is a citadel which is besieged by many invisible foes. It is only necessary to make a small breach, and they will enter and render themselves masters thereof. God reigns over us by order; the devil by disorder. Little faults arise from disorders and irregularities which empower satan to tempt to great sins the soul which has fallen into the habit of venial sins.

The soul that often wilfully commits little faults gradually and almost insensibly divests itself of all horror of those which are great. The habit of committing venial

sins makes us familiar with mortal sin. There is a great resemblance between them. Both proceed from concupiscence; both are suggested by the same demon; both are attracted by the same pleasures; both go towards the same object; both seek the same company, and both follow the same example. The familiarity which is contracted with venial sin, gradually decreases all fear of mortal sin; it divests it of that frightful aspect which used to render it so formidable; and when dread diminishes, effrontery increases, from being accustomed to live in the practice of one, it is natural and easy to pass to the other.

Habit is a second nature which seems stronger and more indomitable than the first. It is a torrent which carries away all that it finds in its current without resistance; it is a habit which urges a soul on and increases its inclination to evil; it acquires power over it by reiterated acts, the little ones contributing as much as the great to its final down fall. It is true, many venial sins do not make one mortal sin; nevertheless it is also true that many light faults dispose the soul to the commission of those which are great. If you accustom yourself to habits of untruth in little things, you will, when your passions are inflamed, be unscrupulous in your betrayal of the truth without reflection or thought. Who can doubt this, since the Son of God himself assures us that he who is unfaithful in little things will also be unfaithful in great things.

It is impossible to serve two masters without loving the one and hating the other. The heart, between its Creator and the creatures, is like iron between two loadstones which in the same degree as it approaches one it withdraws from the other; it is attracted by its affections to one object, and repelled by its aversion from the other. However pure and divine love may be between creatures

in the beginning, it soon becomes human without passing beyond the limits of reason; then natural, and excites the first fever of concupiscence; from natural it becomes importunate; from importunate it becomes carnal, and from carnal impure. In fine, from having commenced with the spirit, it ends with the flesh. Oh, how many holy and devout souls fall into this slough because they do not stifle the inordinate affection in its birth; presume too much on their own strength by exposing themselves to dangerous occasions; love too many persons without discretion, and with too much tenderness, and after having committed many small infidelities, fall at last into the lamentable abyss of mortal sin.

Need we wonder, if God sometimes, even in this world, has sent severe temporal punishments upon people for venial sins. Moses, the great servant of the Lord was not permitted to set his foot on the promised Land, because he committed one venial sin of diffidence in God.

Lot's wife, for having looked towards Sodom, contrary to the commands of the angel, was turned into a pillar of salt.

Oza, for having sustained, with less respect than he should, the Ark of the Covenant, when it was on the point of falling, was instantly struck dead, though his action was praiseworthy and full of religion.

Fifty thousand Bethsamites, and seventy of the most distinguished among them, experienced the same fate, for having looked at the Ark with sentiments of sinful curiosity.

David, for having numbered his subjects through a motive of vanity, was severely punished; for his kingdom was ravaged by a cruel pestilence which in three days destroyed seventy thousand persons.

In the third Book of Kings it is related that God sent to Jeroboam, King of Israel, a prophet who was truly a man of virtue. But God forbade him to eat and drink in the town of Bethel to which he sent him. Jeroboam invited him to dine with him, but the prophet refused, in obedience to God's command. As he was going away, another old prophet, who dwelt in Bethel, prevailed on the man of God to take some refreshments in his house. Now when he was sitting at table, the Lord told the disobedient prophet that he would not be borne to the sepulchre of his fathers on account of his disobedience. In fact, as he was returning home, he was killed by a lion. (III. Kings, chap. 13.)

And now, who can tell how severely God punishes souls in purgatory for venial sins! (See volume Apostles' Creed, p. 396 etc.) What great folly, then, for any one to think that venial sin is of little consequence and may be committed without much scruple!

Capital Sins.

There are seven capital sins—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. They are called *capital* sins, not because they are always mortal, but because every capital sin is the source of many other sins.

(1) *Pride* is an inordinate desire of our own elevation and a vain complacency in ourselves. It may be called a swelling out of the heart proceeding from a puffed-up mind, that is to say, from a too high idea a man has of himself and his own merit; it leads us to set ourselves up before others by despising them, and to self-glorification by referring things to ourselves, instead of glorifying God by referring everything to him.

Almost all vices spring from pride as from their fountain-head; but there are some that flow more directly from

it, and which are on that account called the offspring of pride. The chief of these are vainglory, boasting, luxury, pompousness, haughtiness, ambition, hypocrisy, presumption, obstinacy, disobedience, self-delusion with regard to our own defects.

(2) *Covetousness* is an inordinate love of money and the goods of this world. To seek a fortune for a good end, subordinate to one's duties and to salvation, is right and proper; otherwise, it is the sin of avarice. This vice separates us from God, because we cannot serve two masters — God and mammon. It produces neglect of salvation, selfishness, hardness towards the poor, craftiness, injustice, quarrels; to say nothing of cares, anxieties, and murmurings against divine Providence. The covetous man —

The laughing stock of demons and of men,
 And by his guardian angel given up,
 Of all God made upright
 And in their nostrils breathed a living soul
 Most fallen, most prone, most earthly, most debased
 Of all that sell eternity for time
 None bargains on so easy terms with hell.

(3) By *envy* is meant the sadness that springs from witnessing the spiritual or temporal good of another, because it seems to lessen our own, or our own merit. This vice engenders rash judgments, detraction, malicious joy at the faults or disgrace of our neighbor, hatred, and vexations of all kinds.

Envy, eldest born of hell, imbrued
 Her hands in blood, and taught the sons of men
 To make a death which nature never made
 And God abhorred.

(4) *Lust*, or the vice opposed to chastity, and forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments, is the vile

source of innumerable sins. Moreover, the criminal affection for carnal pleasures produces disgust for piety, darkness of the understanding, hardness of heart, the diminution and even extinction of faith. It destroys the health of the body and the noblest qualities of the soul, brings trouble and ruin upon families, and often leads to final impenitence.

(5) *Gluttony* is an inordinate love of eating and drinking, or the evil inclination that inclines men to the immoderate use of food or drink. The slaves of this degrading vice stoop so low as to make a god of their belly (Phil. iii.). Gluttony may be committed by indulging in food too expensive or delicate for one's condition in life, by eating at unsuitable hours, or by eating and drinking to excess. Gluttony produces drunkenness, impurity, outbursts of passion, blasphemies, angry quarrels, blows or threats, heaviness of soul, disgust for spiritual things, disregard of the laws of the Church for fasting and abstinence. When excess in drinking amounts to intoxication, and deprives a man of the use of his reason, it is a mortal sin.

(6) *Anger* is an emotion or inordinate transport of the soul, which causes us violently to reject what displeases us, and impels us to take revenge on those who contradict us. The effects of anger are hatred, revenge, imprecations, blasphemies, outrages, and sometimes duelling and murder. Anger becomes a mortal sin when the emotion goes so far as to extinguish the love of God and our neighbor, and makes us blaspheme or commit other sins of serious gravity. There is a certain anger, a just and reasonable indignation, which is exempt from sin; it springs from true zeal and the pure love of justice.

(7) *Sloth* is an inordinate love of ease, a languor of the soul, and a disgust for the labor required for the fulfilment of our duties. Sloth becomes a mortal sin when through it

we fail to fulfil a serious obligation. Sloth produces idleness, loss of time, negligence, ignorance, inconstancy in keeping good resolutions, tepidity, temptations of all kinds, and cowardice, which disposes us to yield to them.

Sins against the Holy Ghost. The sins classified as *sins against the Holy Ghost* are those of pure malice. They are directly opposed to the love and mercy of God, and on that account render conversion very difficult. They are six in number, namely :

(a) Despair of the grace of God or of salvation.

(b) Presumption of God's mercy to save us without good works.

(c) To impugn the truths of faith proposed by the Church.

(d) Envy at another's spiritual good.

(e) Obstinacy in sin in spite of the salutary exhortations, graces, lights, and warnings that God sends us.

(f) Contempt of doing penance for sin.

God's mercy is the foundation of all our hope, and we despise and distrust it by the sin of despair.

Our general motive to avoid sin is the judgment of God which unites justice to mercy, and without fear of punishment we disregard the divine justice and mercy by the sin of presumption.

Another important motive to avoid sin is man's knowledge of the revealed truths, the gifts of the Holy Ghost infused into his soul by sanctifying grace; but in order to commit crime with greater liberty, he despises these spiritual gifts by the sin of impenitence; and seeing the spiritual progress of others who profit by the grace of God, he is inflamed with envy and jealousy.

Another powerful motive to avoid sin is to consider its enormity, to be sorry for having committed such and such

a crime, and to reflect on the shortness of life, and the immortality of the soul. Now, man despises and disregards all those thoughts and inspirations by the sin of obstinacy and contempt of doing penance.

In Holy Scripture it is said that the sins against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven either in this world nor in the next. "Every sin and blasphemy," said our divine Saviour, "shall be forgiven men; but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven them either in this world or in the next." (Matt. xii. 31, 32.) In these words, our dear Saviour did not wish to declare that this sin cannot be forgiven at all; but he very emphatically gives us to understand those who commit a sin against the Holy Ghost, find it most difficult to repent of it sincerely, and without true and sincere repentance of sin, there can be no forgiveness.

Before Jesus Christ had given an incontestable manifestation of his Divinity, the Jews were, to a certain degree, excusable for not believing in it. Their want of faith was owing to human frailty or ignorance. But after they had the best proofs for it by his numberless miracles, they refused to believe in it, and attributed his miracles to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, and at the same time blasphemed the Holy Ghost from sheer wilful malice; they did not care to repent of their sin either in this world or in the next.

The Roman legions were the first instruments of divine vengeance; for when Jerusalem fell under the irresistible power of the Roman empire, many thousands of the Jews were slaughtered by the sword, pestilence, and famine; and a general conflagration reduced to ashes what the sword, famine, and pestilence had spared. The destruction of Jerusalem, says St. John Chrysostom, and the dis-

persion of the Jews in all parts of the world is their temporal punishment, and their eternal punishment after this life is their eternal damnation.

St. Athanasius when treating of the same subject says : God punished their forefathers with a like chastisement. When the Israelites were in want of bread and water in the desert, they murmured against Moses. God did not punish them for having done so, because their sin was a sin of human frailty rather than of a malicious heart.

But when they attributed their deliverance to the Gods of idolaters in impious language, saying : "Israel, these are the gods who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, God punished that blasphemous idolatry by the destruction of twenty-three thousand of them and foretold them the punishment reserved for them in the other world : "And I in the day of revenge will visit this sin they have committed." (Exod. xxxii. 34.)

The sin of blasphemy against God is of so heinous a nature as to render it irremissible unless by an extraordinary miracle of divine power and mercy.

When a sick man is exhausted of all his strength and natural powers, and no longer able to take food and medicine, he is in a state of which God alone can cure him. In like manner he who is guilty of blasphemy, which is a spiritual malady, rejects all means by which he might obtain pardon ; but by his infinite power and mercy, God sometimes miraculously heals these kinds of spiritual maladies. Blasphemy seldom or never takes root in the heart of man without some other heinous sins, and then by the instigation of the devil, he falls into final impenitence, which is the principal cause of its irremissibility.

The four sins crying to heaven for vengeance.

1) *Wilful murder*; 2) *sodomy*; 3) *oppression of the poor, of widows, and of orphans*; 4) *defrauding laborers of their wages*.

These are four very dreadful crimes, against which God expresses his anger in the strongest terms. We have already explained them. *Wilful murder* is explained in the fifth commandment; *sodomy*, in the sixth, and *oppression of the poor and defrauding laborers of their wages* in the seventh.

These four sins are said "*to cry to heaven for vengeance*," because we find them so represented in Holy Writ.

1) *Wilful murder*. — "The Lord said to Cain: What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth." (Gen. iv. 10.)

2) *Sodomy*. — The Lord said: "The sin of Sodom is become exceedingly grievous. We will destroy this place, because their cry is grown loud before the Lord." (Gen. xviii. 20.)

3) *Oppression of the poor*. — "You shall not hurt a widow or an orphan. If you hurt them, *they will cry out to me, and I will hear their cry*." (Exod. xxii, 22 to 24.) "He will not accept any person against a poor man, and *he will hear the prayer of him that is wronged*. He will not despise the prayers of the fatherless: nor the widow when she poureth out her complaint. Do not the widow's tears run down the cheek, and *her cry* against him that causeth them to fall? For from the cheek *they go up even to heaven*, and the Lord that heareth will not be delighted with them." (Ecc. (xxv. 16 to 19.)

Defrauding laborers of their wages. — "Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which

by fraud hath been kept back by you, *crieth*; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” (James v. 4.)

The nine ways of being accessory to another person's sins.

There are some persons, who concern themselves but very little about the sins which they *cause* their neighbor to commit; although they are as guilty before God, as if they committed the sinful acts themselves; and even more so. We may *cause* others to sin (and so be guilty ourselves), in these nine ways, viz.:—

1. *By counsel*: i. e., by advising or directing the commission of an evil;—

2. *By command*: by forcing or obliging any one to it;—

3. *By consent*: by permitting any of those who are under our control, to commit it; —

4. *By provocation*: by exciting any one to passion, to cursing, to lewdness, &c.; —

5. *By praise or flattery*: by praising or flattering any person for the evil which he has done, and thereby causing him to do it again; —

6. *By concealment*: by hiding the crime, or the criminal, or things that have been stolen; and thereby encouraging the evil to go on; — or by harboring thieves, or lewd persons, &c., thereby favoring their criminal practices; —

7. *By partaking*: by sharing in ill-gotten goods, or in any other fruits of wickedness, whereby we encourage the transgressions; —

8. *By silence*: by not speaking to prevent an evil, when we *should and could* have prevented it; —

9. *By defence of the ill done*: by justifying the evil-doers, or their evil actions; and also by defending false religions.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

Christian virtue is an abiding disposition, a habitual firmness of the will to do, under all circumstances, the holy will of God. When the Holy Ghost infuses sanctifying grace into the soul, he at the same time communicates to it the theological and all the other Christian virtues. But, generally, these infused virtues exist in the soul at first only in a state of germ, or like young plants, which must grow up by our own co-operation. Practice, good works, prayer and the reception of the Sacraments keep up the *infused* virtues, strengthen them, and produce those *acquired habits* of virtue which constitute their Christian perfection.

God wishes all men to acquire Christian perfection. "Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 38.) Christian perfection is indeed the most precious of all treasures. Since I write for Christians, who believe in God, I can give no better proof to make them duly appreciate the excellence of virtue than the judgment of God who cannot be deceived. "The judgments of the Lord," says the prophet, "are true, justified in themselves." (Ps. xviii. 10.) Hence, things are valuable in proportion to the esteem in which they are held by the Eternal Wisdom. Now, what judgment has God passed on the excellence of virtue? Hear it. "Earth, earth, earth, which judgeth according to the look of a man," (I. Kings xvi. 7.) "hear the word of the Lord." (Jerem. xxii. 29.) The Lord says: "*The possession*" of wisdom, (which eminently consists in true piety) is better than the merchandise of

silver, and its fruit better than the purest gold ; it is more precious than all riches ; and all things that are desired are not to be compared with it ; it is the free of life to them that lay hold on it, and he that shall retain it, is blessed." (Prov. iii. 14.) "it is an infinite treasure to men." (Wisd. vii. 14.) Behold the judgment of God, but mark the consequence following from it. "Gold then, compared with virtue, is as little as sand, and silver compared with it shall be counted as clay." Therefore virtue is in value above kingdoms and thrones and all that is considered precious in this world. Be as wise and rich as Solomon, if you are as wicked as he became, you will be rejected by the Lord. Be as poor as Job on the dung-hill, if you are as virtuous as he was, your soul will be carried by the angels into heaven.

Now, how do we acquire Christian perfection ? The Catechism says : "We grow in holiness by the practice of the theological and of the moral virtues. The theological virtues are faith, hope and charity. These have been explained in volume "The Greatest and The First Commandment." It is, therefore, only necessary to explain here the *moral* virtues, and those which are opposed to the seven capital sins.

Those virtues are called *moral*, which have for their direct and immediate object the regulation of our morals, differing from the theological virtues in this, that the latter exercise, it is true, a powerful influence over our morals ; but it is only in an indirect way, their direct object being God himself and his divine perfections. The moral virtues are the worthy and faithful companions of the theological virtues.

The moral virtues, in their nature and by themselves, are of the natural order, because God has sown the seeds

of them in our nature, and has given us a certain aptitude for developing them within us. But they become supernatural in the Christian, (1) at the moment of justification, when they pass into the state of infused virtues; (2) in the exercise of them; for their acts are ennobled by the grace which accompanies them and by motives founded on faith.

There are numerous moral virtues, amongst which four are predominant over all the others, and are called *cardinal*, (from the Latin word "cardo", which means a *hinge*), because they are as *the hinges* whereon the whole Christian life must constantly move, and whereby it is necessarily supported.

The four cardinal virtues are *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance*. A group of secondary or tributary virtues rallies round each one.

1. *Prudence* is a virtue which points out and commands what is to be done in order that each of our actions be such as honesty and wisdom require.

It is called the *conductor of the virtues*. It holds the reins of all the others, and this is why it occupies the first place amidst the cardinal virtues.

Real and perfect *prudence* is that Christian prudence which is regulated by the faith and the principles of the Gospel. It directs man in all his actions towards his last end — that is to say, towards God, and salvation, which is in God. To Christian prudence is opposed *false prudence*, which is called the prudence of the *children of this world*, which is regulated by the false principles of the world, and directs the whole man towards the perishable goods of the earth.

To prudence belong the consideration of past events; the knowledge of things present; the forecasting of the future; docility in following the advice of wise and ex-

perienced persons; sagacity in choosing the right thing according to the occasion; circumspection, by which we examine all the circumstances of time, place, and persons; precautions against obstacles, dangers and unpleasant events; discretion in keeping secrets; vigilance, and, lastly, activity.

The vices opposed to prudence are precipitation, inconsiderateness, inconstancy, negligence, trickiness, fraud; prudence of the flesh, which makes all things subordinate to the gratification of pride and sensuality; and lastly, too great solicitude for temporal things.

2. *Justice.* In its limited sense, Justice is a virtue, whereby we give to every man his own; but, as a *Cardinal* virtue, it means much more—it includes all the duties which we owe both to *God* and *man*: “Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s.” (Matt. xxii. 21.) We render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, or are just towards our neighbor, when we do no injury to him either in his goods, or in his honor, or in his person; and when, moreover, we fulfil towards him all those duties, which society and religion give him a right to expect from us. And we render to God the things that are God’s, and are therefore just towards *him*, when we fulfil the whole of his law, which is justice and truth: “All thy commandments are justice,... and thy law is the truth.” (Ps. cxviii. 172, 142.) If we transgress the commandments of God, or neglect his service, we are then *unjust* towards God: “Unless your *justice* abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after *justice*; for they shall have their fill.” “Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his *justice*.”

To justice belong the virtues of religion, piety, respect, obedience, gratitude, penance, veracity, friendship, affability and liberality. In this group of virtues religion is distinguished above all the others, being the most excellent of the moral virtues, because it has the worship of God for its object.

The vices opposed to justice are injustice, theft, impiety, sacrilege, contempt, disobedience and ingratitude.

3. *Fortitude*.—Fortitude is a virtue which enables us to face any danger or difficulty for the cause of justice and truth,—to suffer any thing, rather than to act contrary to the fidelity which we owe to God; it is an invincible courage in the fulfilment of our duty, founded on the goodness and providence of God. And we have innumerable examples of it in the martyrs, who endured the most excruciating torments, the most painful and lingering deaths, rather than do any thing against either truth or morality. Martyrdom is, indeed, the most heroic act of fortitude.

4. *Temperance*.—In its limited sense, Temperance means *moderation in eating and drinking*; but, as a *Cardinal* virtue, it means *moderation in all things*, and enables us to restrain *every* desire of the heart, according to the dictates of reason and religion. Even *virtues* may sometimes be injured by *excess*, as well as by deficiency (as, for example, the virtue of mortification); what would otherwise be a virtuous action, may, by intemperance in the performance of it, be rendered vicious. Our passions naturally incline us to run into excess; Temperance, therefore, is necessary for us: it is by means of this virtue, that we are to restrain and subdue our passions, and to keep them in complete subjection to reason.

To temperance are attached sobriety and abstinence, chastity, modesty, humility, meekness, and clemency.

The vices opposed to it are gluttony, drunkenness, impurity, immodesty, pride, anger, levity, dissipation, and in general all excess in things which are agreeable to the senses.

From this short explanation of the Four Cardinal Virtues, we see how necessary they are for us — how we have to practise them at all times, and on all occasions, — and with what reason it is, that they are called "*Cardinal*;" for we see how they contain the practice of every other moral virtue: how prudence, by directing us to seek and secure our last end, leads us to esteem and employ the proper means of fulfilling our entire duty; how Justice is the actual fulfilment of *every* obligation which we *owe* to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves; and how Fortitude and Temperance insure perseverance in our duty, — for Fortitude secures us from being led away by what is terrifying or painful to nature, and Temperance prevents us from incurring the like evil by what is flattering to our inclinations or pleasing to the senses.

The virtues contrary to the seven capital sins are:

1, Humility; 2, liberality; 3, chastity; 4, meekness; 5, temperance in eating and drinking; 6, brotherly love; 7, diligence.

1. *Humility*. — Humility is opposed to pride; it is a virtue which, from the knowledge that it gives man of his own weakness, his impotency, his miseries, his defects, and his nothingness, induces him to *despise himself*, and makes him neither consider himself, nor wish to be considered by others, anything but what he really is. Humility is in an especial manner recommended to us by Jesus Christ in his Gospel: "Learn of me," he says, "because I am meek and humble of heart." (Mat. xi. 29.) And when, one day, his disciples asked him which of them would be greatest in

the kingdom of heaven, he took a child, and, placing him in the midst of them, said: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. xviii. 3.) What can more strongly prove the necessity of humility than these words of our Lord? Do they not evidently make known to us that pride is an insurmountable obstacle to salvation, and that without humility it is impossible to gain heaven? "It is by humility — that virtue opposed to pride" — says St. Ambrose, "that we can obtain eternal life. Humility is the right road to heaven, and the only road." He who shall enter any other way will fall, and cannot easely arise, because "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," says Christ.

St. Francis Carracciolo, founder of the Friars Minor, after having spent many years in Spain, returned to pass a few days at Villa-Santa-Maria, the place of his birth. As soon as the inhabitants recognized him, they ran out in crowds to meet him, showing him every mark of the deepest veneration. His humility took alarm. Standing in the most public part of the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he drew forth from his pocket a crucifix, and holding it up to all about him, he said: "It is to this image you should show marks of veneration and love, and not to a miserable sinner such as I am, who have returned among you only to repair the scandals which I had given to you in my young days. Go away, and deprive me not of the fruits of that penance which I am going to perform for my past sins. Forget me altogether, and recollect that no man can be called just in this life, particularly if he feels his conscience torn for the crimes which he has formerly committed." After addressing the crowd in this strain, he

withdrew into a secret place, and on the following day he set out privately for Naples.

"I could never act as some do," said St. Francis de Sales, "who as soon as they are raised to any dignity, try to enforce the honor due to them, and who will not deign to sign themselves in their letters: "Your most humble servant," unless they are writing to persons above them in rank. As for myself, it is hard for me to make any difference between those to whom I write. All bear the likeness of their Creator, and I subscribe myself to every one: "Your most humble servant;" unless, indeed, my letter is addressed to Peter or Francis, my servants, who might think I was making fun of them, were I to use this expression."

"I have remarked," says Peter Canus, speaking of St. Francis de Sales, "that when any one, even of the lowest rank, visited him, the holy bishop assumed the demeanor of an inferior in the presence of his superior, receiving his visitor with the greatest kindness, listening to, and conversing with him, without any regard to the loss of time or the little utility he might expect would be derived from the conversation." To submit to superiors, is justice, to submit to equals, is friendship and politeness; but to submit to inferiors, is the peculiar characteristic of humility, which tells us, that, since we are nothing, we ought to cast ourselves at the feet of every one.

2. *Liberality.* — Liberality, which is opposed to covetousness, withdraws the affections from earthly possessions, and leads us to exercise works of mercy; it makes us look upon giving as "a more blessed thing than receiving;" and it inclines us, therefore, to "bow down our ear *cheerfully* to the poor," and open our hand *readily* for the relief of him that is in distress. (See volume "The Greatest and the First Commandment," p. 89 etc.)

3. *Chastity*. — The virtue contrary to lust is chastity. Chastity is so pleasing to God, that it draws down upon us his choicest graces and blessings. It renders our souls the spouses of Jesus Christ, and makes us like angels on earth, and on that account is called the angelic virtue. In order to obtain and preserve it, we must be humble, because humility is the mother and guardian of chastity; we must love prayer, retirement, and be always engaged at some occupation, lead a penitent and mortified life, suppress all vain curiosity, watch, resist temptations, confess often, and reflect upon death, eternity, judgment, heaven, hell, and in particular on the passion of Christ. (See volume "Grace and the Sacraments," p. 554 etc.)

4. *Meekness*. — Meekness is contrary to anger; and it shows itself in mildness of conduct, gentleness of temper, and patient forbearance: it is a most amiable virtue, which not only corrects our own anger, but also disarms that of others; and it makes persons beloved both by God and man: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." (Matt. xi. 29.)

It is, generally speaking, self-conceit in a man to believe that he is as meek as he ought to be. This very presumption is a sign that he does not know how difficult it is to acquire a perfect degree of the virtue, which he imagines to possess. There are but few who reach a high degree of meekness, because, generally speaking, the essence of this virtue is not properly understood.

"Many," says St. Francis de Sales, "practise virtue as long as they have nothing annoying to do and have no other burden to carry than their own. But let them be placed under circumstances that oblige them to bear with others, then it will soon be seen whether they possess virtue — true charity and meekness to bear with the weak-

ness of their fellow-men; real humility to suffer contempt; prudence to wait for a favorable time to do what duty requires and to suppress that false zeal which is nothing but masked impatience."

One day he was accused of having yielded to anger. He answered, "I am, it is true, a miserable creature and subject to passion; but, by the grace of God, since I was consecrated bishop, never have I said an angry word to my people."

The meekness of St. Francis de Sales was not, however, that false meekness practised by worldlings through politeness, which consists in a few gracious words and actions. It was that genuine meekness that proceeds from the heart and is, as it were, the flower of love, which fills the soul with tenderness, condescension, and compassion, and manifests itself exteriorly by a graciousness of manner and wisely-tempered demeanor, — the fruit of a holy affection. Nor was his meekness, that bashful and awkward reserve, which sometimes passes for virtue. Much less did it partake of the nature of that apathetic indifference, which is disturbed at nothing, because it feels nothing, which hates nothing, because it loves nothing, and which always yields, because everything is alike to it. His meekness was full of life, but, at the same time, serious and discreet. It seldom descended to caressing marks of affection; "for," said he, "we must not be lavish of such things, or make use of sweet words on every occasion, bestowing them in profusion upon the first one we meet." In a word, his meekness was characterized by nobleness, dignity, and majesty, producing, upon those who were brought in communication with him an effect in which piety, love and reverence were equally blended. This virtue was exteriorly manifested by the serenity of his countenance, the affability

of his manners the graciousness and mildness of his words which made all he said very pleasant.

Now, the meekness of St. Francis de Sales was not a virtue infused into his soul by the Holy Ghost; it was a virtue acquired by many great efforts and hard struggles, as we learn from his own words.

One day he bore with a gross insult without uttering a word in self-defence. Thereupon his brother asked him whether he did not experience any angry feelings at so great an insult? "I did, indeed," answered the saintly bishop; "the blood was boiling in my veins like water in a vessel on the fire, but by careful examination of conscience which I have practised for twenty-two years, by unwearying watchfulness, constant struggles, and repeated victories gained over myself, I have, if I may be allowed the expression, so collared my anger, that it is entirely under my control."

5. *Temperance.*—Temperance and sobriety are contrary to gluttony: and they are virtues necessary for us, not only as preservatives from that vice, and from many other sins; but also as means of practising that penance, mortification, and self-denial, so much insisted upon and enforced by Christ and his Apostles.

6. *Brotherly Love.*—Brotherly love, which is opposed to envy, "rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep;" (Rom. xii. 15.)—it is the very spirit and practice of Christianity: "The love of our neighbor worketh no evil; love therefore is the fulfilling of the law;" (Rom. xiii. 8.)—it is also the characteristic mark of the true followers of Christ: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples—if you have love one for another." (John xiii. 35.)—(See "The Greatest and the First Commandment," p. 48 to 214.)

7. *Diligence*.—Diligence, or spiritual fervor, which is opposed to sloth, is a virtue by which we are zealous in *laboring* for the service of God, and the salvation of our soul: it makes the duties of religion appear, not burdensome or tedious, but easy and agreeable;—it keeps the lamp of our faith burning with the oil of good works; and so causes us to be *always ready*, like the five wise virgins;—and, having made us rich in good works, it will entitle us, at our entrance into eternity, to hear from our Lord these consoling words: “Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Matt. xxv. 21.)

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION:

Evangelical Counsels, States of Life, Vocation.

The perfection of man, says St. Thomas, consists in being united with God — his last-end, for whom he was created. Now it is principally charity that unites us to God. "For he that abideth in charity," says St. John, "abideth in God, and God in him." (I. John iv. 16.) "He that loveth not abideth in death." (I. John iii. 14.) Christian perfection, therefore, consists in charity. Hence St. Paul says: "Above all have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. iii. 14.) Charity binds all virtues in perfect unity.

To be a perfect Christian, then, is to have true Christian charity, and to have true charity is to be a perfect Christian. Perfection and charity, therefore, are but one and the same thing.

Now, Jesus Christ has shown three ways to practise charity, which are so many ways of going to God and be saved. The first is that of keeping the commandments, for all men must keep them in order to be saved. "Good master," said a young man to our Saviour, "what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting? Jesus said to him: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. xix. 21.)

The second way of going to God is that of the counsels, which consists in adding to the way of the commandments, the practice of the three great virtues of the Evangelical counsels — *voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity and entire obedience* to a spiritual superior.

Our Lord proposes the counsels as a more excellent way than that of the commandments; but he does not make this way obligatory; he simply holds it out to generous souls who wish to consecrate their whole life to the service of God.

The third way is that of celibacy, or of virginity, in the world.

Thus we have three states of life — marriage, celibacy, and religious life. These states of life are all venerable and holy, but not equally perfect if considered in themselves, or as a means of salvation and sanctification.

Celibacy or virginity is more perfect than marriage. "He that is without a wife is solicitous of the things that belong to the Lord; but he that has a wife is solicitous of the things of the world, and how he may please his wife." (I. Cor. vii. 32, 33.) The Catholic Church has solemnly excommunicated "any one who asserts that it is not a better and a more blessed thing to remain in virginity or celibacy than be united in matrimony." (Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv. Can. 10.) (See here vol. "Grace and the Sacraments," Chapter on Virginity, p. 548 to 583.)

The religious life is the most perfect of the three. Religion consists in offering supreme worship and honor to God. Hence it is that all those, who by the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, consecrate their whole lives to the service of the Lord, — who sacrifice to his honor and glory their senses, mind and heart, are called religious.

The first obligation of the religious life is the practice of voluntary poverty, which is the foundation of the religious life.

Our Lord's answer to the young man who said, "From my youth I have kept all the commandments. What is

wanting to me?" was: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Matt. xix. 21.) "Peter answering, said to him: Behold we have *left all things*, and have followed thee; what therefore shall we have? And Jesus said to them: Amen, I say to you, that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his Majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And *every one* that hath left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or lands, for my name's sake, and for the Gospel, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt. xix. 29.) "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.)

Our Lord says also: "The care of this world and the illusion of riches suffocate the word of God. (Matt. xiii. 23.) "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix. 23, 24.) "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation in this world." (Luke vi. 24.)

Now, these awful declarations lose their terrors, and the soul is relieved from the dangerous burden of riches and the constant solicitude of temporal affairs, so as to be able to walk freely in the way of perfection by keeping the vow of voluntary poverty.

Besides poverty, perpetual chastity is also necessary for the religious life. The religious is bound to abstain from all kinds of carnal delectation, for such a carnal pleasure would be an obstacle to the faithful service of the Lord and to his own salvation.

Obedience is also indispensably necessary to a religious life. Those who study a science or learn a profession, are

obliged to conform to the instructions and will of their master. Now, religion being a school of all moral virtues and perfections, the religious of every Order must obey their superior in imitation of Jesus Christ who obeyed his eternal Father in all things, even unto death.

However the practice of these three virtues is not sufficient for the religious life. All theologians say with St. Thomas that vows also are necessary for the religious life, because the religious life essentially consists in them, and that without vows it could not be a state of perfection. A state implies stability and permanence. Hence a state of perfection necessarily supposes a perpetual obligation to practise what perfection requires.

Now, it is by vows that this perpetual obligation to perfection is contracted, and by them the religious life is a state of perfection. "Whoever puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." (Luke ix. 62.) If religious were at liberty to return to the world, they would no longer belong to God in the same degree of perfection. They might offer him a meritorious sacrifice in other good works; but unless the victim is completely consumed, the holocaust is not perfect.

Vows are, therefore, absolutely necessary for the faithful observance of poverty, chastity and obedience, which are the principal obligations of the religious life.

"Why is it," asks St. Thomas, "that bishops live in a state of perfection, whilst secular priests do not?" The reason is, because when bishops accept the dignity of the episcopacy, their consecration imposes a solemn obligation on them to feed their flock and protect them even at the peril of their life; they solemnly promise to fulfil all the duties of good pastors; but the good pastor lays down his life for his flock, and to sacrifice one's life for others is the

highest degree of christian charity. Bishops, therefore, as they are in the state of perfection, cannot resign their pastoral charge without the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. Secular priests and deans, however, though they have charge of souls, are not *always obliged* to take care of souls, but may disengage themselves from this care, and resign that charge with the bishop's permission. For this reason secular priests and deans are not in a state of perfection.

Bishops are even in a higher state of perfection than religious are. Religious often accept the episcopacy, and if the episcopacy were not a higher degree of the state of perfection, they would renounce a more perfect state of life in becoming bishops. Religious, it is true, by making the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, put themselves in the state of perfection; but these counsels are only means of perfection, and counsels are not so obligatory as the formal precepts of the state of the episcopacy.

Now, though we say that the religious of all orders and the prelates of the Church are in the state of perfection, yet we do not mean to say that they consider themselves perfect, but we say so, because they bind themselves in conscience by a public profession to become perfect. St. Paul says, "Not that I have already attained to perfection, but I pursue my course, if by any means I can attain it through Jesus Christ." (Philip. iii. 12.)

From what has been said, it will be easy to see the difference between the perfection of a secular person and that of a religious. A person in the world may be more perfect than a religious is; yet, for that he is not in the state of perfection, while a religious really is in it. The perfection of a secular person, as it is not confirmed and supported by vows, has not that stability and constancy in good, which

that of a religious has. The religious feels himself bound under pain of mortal sin to aim at perfection and increase in it, but a person in the world does not feel himself so bound. Hence it often happens, that a person in the world leads a pure and a holy life to-day, and to-morrow he relents.

One day a holy man was asked whether a person in the world could acquire Christian perfection. "Of course, he can," said he; "but I like one degree of grace in religion better than two in the world, because in religion we are separated from the world — the great enemy of grace; we are continually excited to virtue by good example, and therefore grace is easily increased and preserved, whilst in the world it is very easily lost, at least very hard to be preserved."

Hence it is a great error to say, "I do not see why I cannot lead a holy life as easily in the world as in the convent." It is true, you may experience a certain fervor of devotion in the world; you may go often to confession and communion; you may withdraw yourself far from the occasions of sin; but it is also true that you are not under strict obedience to any one, nor under a perpetual obligation to practise what perfection requires; it is true that you meet everywhere with obstacles to piety, and therefore it is also true that to-day you will neglect one exercise of devotion and to-morrow another; to-day you will dispense yourself from going to confession and holy communion, and to-morrow your will distract yourself in company; and at length you will find yourself full of deliberate faults, perhaps even in the state of mortal sin. It is not so in religion, for a religious is not at liberty to dispense himself from his spiritual exercises, nor to disengage himself from the obligations which he has contracted by his vows which form that triple cord of which the Wise man says, "that it is very difficult to break it." (Eccles. iv. 12.)

The religious life is in itself only of counsel, a gift offered to the free choice of those who have to decide on a state of life; but it may become an obligation in a case where a person cannot save his soul except by using this great means of salvation.

Now, though there is nothing more holy, more beautiful, or more meritorious than to follow the Evangelical counsels and embrace the religious life, yet no one should take this step without the grace of divine vocation. The divine vocation is known: (1.) By a constant attraction founded on motives of reason and faith to lead a religious life. (2.) By the qualities requisite for fulfilling the obligations which are to be contracted and the dispositions for fulfilling them. (3.) By the moral possibility of leaving the world, or the absence of serious obstacles. (4.) By the consent of a prudent and wise director.

We have explained these marks of a vocation to the religious life, as also its advantages, and refuted the objections brought against it, in our little work, "The Religious State." (To be had at Pustet & Co. Barclay Str., New York.)

In our work "Dignity, Authority and Duties of Parents, etc." we have shown, in chapter xxxviii, how those who are not called to the religious life, may lead a life of perfection in the world.

No doubt, there are many persons in the world, who have a great desire to lead a holy life, and yet are not called to the religious life. These persons are advised by Pope Leo XIII. to become, if possible, practicable members of the third Order of St. Francis of Assisi. On the 17th of September, he issued an Encyclical Letter to all the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic World in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic

See, exhorting them to encourage the propagation of the third Order of St. Francis.

Almighty God, who incessantly watches over the welfare of his Church, has, in every century, provided chosen vessels — saints — to defend and edify her and to supply her wants. Such saints, in themselves magnificent gifts of divine Providence, are invariably endowed by God with the graces necessary at that precise time to heal the wounds of mankind and obtain the victory of the Church.

When the world had become Christian and Catholics grew rich and forgot the poor life of Jesus Christ, God called St. Francis to teach the love of Christian poverty to voluptuous Catholics.

So powerful were his words and example, says Pope Leo XIII., “that it is impossible to express the enthusiasm with which the multitude flocked to St. Francis. Wherever he went he was followed by an immense concourse; and in the largest cities as in the smallest towns, it was a common occurrence for men of every state of life to come and beg of him to be admitted to his rule.

Such were the reasons for which the saint determined to institute the brotherhood of the Third Order, which was to admit all ranks, all ages, both sexes, and yet in no way necessitate the rupture of family or social ties. For its rules consist only in obedience to God and his Church; in avoiding factions and quarrels, and in not defrauding our neighbor in any way; in taking up arms only for the defence of our religion and of one's country; in being moderate in food and in clothing; in shunning luxury, and in abstaining from the dangerous seductions of dances and plays.

It is easy to understand what immense advantages must have flowed from an institution of this kind, as salutary in itself as it was admirably adapted to the times.

In fact, from the lowest ranks to the highest, there prevailed an enthusiasm and a generous and eager ardor to be affiliated to this Franciscan Order. Amongst others, king Louis IX., of France, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, sought this honor; and, in the course of centuries, several Sovereign Pontiffs, Cardinals, Bishops, Kings, and Princes have not deemed the Franciscan badges derogatory to their dignity. The associates of the Third Order displayed always as much courage as piety in the defence of the Catholic religion; and if their virtues were objects of hatred to the wicked, they never lacked the approbation of the good and wise, which is the greatest and only desirable honor. More than this, Our Predecessor, Gregory IX., publicly praised their faith and courage; nor did he hesitate to shelter them with his authority, and to call them, as a mark of honor, "*Soldiers of Christ, new Machabees:*" and deservedly so. For the public welfare found a powerful safeguard in that body of men who, guided by the virtues and rules of their founder, applied themselves to revive Christian morality as far as lay in their power to restore it to its ancient place of honor in the state. Certain it is, that to them and their example it was often due that the rivalries of parties were quenched or softened, arms were torn from the furious hands that grasped them, the causes of litigation and dispute were suppressed, consolation was brought to the poor and the abandoned, and luxury, that gulf of fortunes and instrument of corruption, was subdued. And thus domestic peace, incorrupt morality, gentleness of behavior, the legitimate use and preservation of private wealth, civilisation and social stability, spring as from a root from the Franciscan Third Order; and it is in great measure to St. Francis that Europe owes their preservation.

And in our day, the favorers and propagators of

Materialism have increased, who obstinately deny that submission to the Church is due, and thence proceeding gradually beyond all bounds, do not even spare the civil power; they approve of violence and sedition among the people, they attempt agrarian outbreaks, they flatter the desires of the proletariat, and they weaken the foundations of domestic and public order.

In these many and so great miseries, you well know, venerable brethren, that no small alleviation is to be found in the institutes of St. Francis, if only they are brought back to their pristine state; for if they only were in a flourishing condition, faith and piety, and every Christian virtue would easily flourish; the lawless desire for perishing things would be broken; nor would men refuse to have their desires ruled by virtue, though that seems to many to be a most hateful burden. Men bound together by the bonds of true fraternal concord would mutually love each other, and would give that reverence which is becoming to the poor and distressed, as bearing the image of Christ. Besides, those who are thoroughly imbued with the Christian religion feel a conviction that those who are in legitimate authority are to be obeyed for conscience' sake, and that in nothing is anyone to be injured.

Than this disposition of mind nothing is more efficacious to extinguish utterly every vice of this kind, whether violence, injuries, desire for revolution, hatred among the different ranks of society, in all which vices the beginnings and the weapons of socialism are found. Lastly, the question that politicians so laboriously aim at solving, viz, the relation which exists between the rich and poor, would be thoroughly solved if they held this as a fixed principle, viz, that poverty is not wanting in dignity; that the rich should be merciful and munificent, and the poor content with their

lot and labor; and since neither was born for these changeable goods, the one is to attain heaven by patience the other by liberality.

For these reasons it has been long and specially our desire that every one should, to the utmost of his power, aim at imitating St. Francis of Assisi; therefore, as hitherto we have always bestowed special care upon the Third Order of St. Francis, so now, being called by the supreme mercy of God to the office of Sovereign Pontiff since thereby we can most opportunely do the same, we exhort Christian men not to refuse to enrol themselves in this sacred army of Jesus Christ. Many are those who everywhere of both sexes have already begun to walk in the footsteps of the Seraphic Father with courage and alacrity, whose zeal we praise and specially commend, so that, venerable brethren, we desire that by your endeavors especially it may be increased and extended to many. And the special point which we commend is that those who have adopted the insignia of *Penance* shall look to the image of its most holy founder and strive to imitate him, without which the good that they would expect would be futile. Therefore take pains that the people may become acquainted with the Third Order and truly esteem it; provide that those who have the care of souls sedulously teach what it is, how easily anyone may enter it, with how great privileges tending to salvation it abounds, what advantages, public and private, it promises.

And now, as a pledge of celestial favors and in proof of our special good will, we impart most lovingly in the Lord to you, venerable brethren, and to all the clergy and the flock committed to each of you, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the 17th day of September 1882, and in the fifth year of Our Pontificate.

LEO PP. XIII.

The following Pastoral by Leo XIII, when Bishop of Perugia, will be read with interest, as showing how he promoted while in Perugia the Third Order, and how he desired to see it established in every parish:—

We cannot doubt that God, who desired St. Francis to institute this Third Order for the amendment of morals, the support of the faith, and the preservation of concord, desires at the present time to make use of it for the renewal of Christian perfection in the faithful. Neither is this merely our opinion, but rather that of many eminent personages. Jean-Marie Vianney, the late Curé of Ars so renowned for his sanctity, used to say that the revival and propagation of the Third Order in France was ordained by divine wisdom for the salvation of civil and religious liberty. The illustrious Monseigneur de Ségur, showing the power of sanctification inherent in the Third Order, affirms that the hopes of the Christian world are founded upon it. The Catholic Congresses held in Italy, of late years have expressed their desires to see the order of Penance spreading, wider and wider, knowing that from it emanates a most efficacious power for the triumph of the Church of Christ, over her enemies. Yet, what is of more importance, our most Holy Father Pius IX., in his brief to the editor of the *Annali Francescani*, confesses that he also cherishes the same hope which comforts many of the faithful, that from this institution will arise the remedy for the evils which oppress human society.

Therefore we, who have always entertained a special love for the brethren of the Third Order, and, after obtaining from the Sovereign Pontiff the faculty of directing the primary congregation of that Order, have found our love for them increased, again and again exhort the parish priests of our city and diocese to plant and diligently culti-

vate in their parishes this excellent tree, which produces the most precious fruit. Indeed, whilst making the visitation of our diocese, we found, with immense joy to our soul, that where the Third Order had been planted it has already yielded abundant fruit; for with the eradication, or at least with the diminution, of vice, and the amelioration of morals, a firmer faith reigns in those places, charity increases, the practice of good works is promoted; and the faithful instructed in the divine wisdom of Christ, more easily and securely escape the snares of the perfidious, who are working with all their might to withdraw Christians from the bosom of the Church and obedience to the Roman Pontiff.

Accordingly we exhort as forcibly as possible all pastors of souls to employ every care and diligence in propagating this Seraphic Order amongst their flocks, explaining to the people, either privately or publicly, its excellence, its facility, its advantages. Its excellence, indeed, since it had for its author the most illustrious Francis of Assisi, a man worthy to be compared with the Seraphim, a man most beloved of Christ, whom he resembled most perfectly; since amongst its members there are so great a number renowned for their piety and learning; since it has had so many and so great admirers and panegyrists, especially among the Roman Pontiffs, who have enriched it with most singular privileges and indulgences. Its facility, in the second place, that the faithful may not refuse to join the Order through prejudice or fear of imaginary difficulties, when persuaded that it was expressly instituted by St. Francis for those who are obliged to live in the world, and therefore does not impose any obligation on its members, whilst it strives and promotes amongst them the observance of the divine commandments and the precepts of the Church by means of the practice of good

works. Lastly, let them show forth its advantages and utility, seeing that the Third Order restores peace, tranquillity, and all virtues to domestic and civil society.

We give notice to the parish priests of our city that the Third Order has been for some time already legally established here, in the church of the Oratory of St. Philip. Let it be known to all that it is our desire that this congregation should make daily fresh progress by increasing the number of its members, by appropriate discourses at the monthly meetings of both sexes, and by a most careful observance of the rules of the Order. And to this effect, it is necessary that all who are called to take a share with us in the burden of pastoral solicitude, should unite with us in this work perseveringly and untiringly, as a result of which, they may be most sure, they will co-operate efficaciously in restoring or preserving to their flocks true morality and integrity of faith.

Given at Perugia Jan. 12th, 1877.

JOACHIM CARDINAL BISHOP.

What better eulogy can be bestowed upon the Third Order of St. Francis than is contained in the Encyclical and Pastoral Letter of Pope Leo XIII.? Indeed, if the advantages of being a member of this Order were not extraordinary great, so many illustrious personages would not have joined it. At least one hundred and thirty-four emperors, queens, princes and dukes belonged to the Third Order. Among the Popes are Gregory IX., Julius II., Leo X., Sixtus V., Paul V., Pius VI., Pius IX., as well as the Pontiff who at present so happily occupies the Chair of St. Peter. St. Ignatius Loyola, says *Les Annales Catholiques*, and St. Vincent de Paul wore the cord of St. Francis.

Moreover, the Franciscan Order has given the Church 3,000 bishops, and 3,000 saints or beatified persons, of whom 1,700 are martyrs.

No one who is acquainted with the Third Order of St. Francis and its true spirit can doubt that those who join it and live up to its spirit will sanctify themselves and die a holy death. What we have said, in the volume "Devotion of the Holy Rosary" of the advantages of being a member of a confraternity approved by the Church applies especially to the Third Order of St. Francis.

In this Order, moreover, many indulgences may be easily obtained by its members. We have shown, in volume "Holy Eucharist and Penance" p. 537 to 539, and p. 553 to 577, how important it is to avail ourselves of this means to cancel temporal punishments still due to our sins after the eternal punishment has been remitted.

Any one who wishes to become a member of the Third Order of St. Francis must apply either to a Franciscan or Capuchin Father, or to a priest who has been empowered by a Father Provincial of the Franciscans to receive persons into the third Order. This power is easily obtained. The priest, then, who receives you blesses for you, what is called the "Seraphic Cord" of St. Francis, which you must wear as a condition to share in all the spiritual advantages of the Franciscan Order. The Rules of the Third Order are not obligatory under pain of sin, not even of venial sin. They consist, as Pope Leo XIII. says, in obedience to God and his Church, in living up to the spirit of St. Francis. If you cannot pray like St. Francis, you can at least make a spiritual reading and reflect on the same. If you are not strong enough to fast like St. Francis, you may at least deprive yourself of some delicate morsel. You cannot quit the world, as St. Francis did; but you may at

least avoid its spirit. You cannot love God with as pure a love as St. Francis did; but you may love him at least out of gratitude. You do not experience so lively a sorrow for sin as St. Francis did; but you can make efforts to obtain it by prayer. You cannot bestow as many alms as St. Francis did; but you can give at least a drink of water. You are not virtuous enough to bear as great insults as St. Francis did; but you may bear at least a little reproach without murmuring. You cannot suffer being despised according to the example of St. Francis; but you may bear with that little coldness manifested by your neighbor in his behavior towards you. You have not courage enough to offer your life to God in sacrifice for the conversion of sinners, as St. Francis did; but you can put up with some inconvenience, and preserve patience under some little trying circumstances.

Have a great esteem for prayer, which is the great means of salvation; for devotion which consecrates all our actions to the service of God; for humility which makes us have a low opinion of ourselves and of our actions; for patience which makes us endure all things for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Do not practise only those virtues which are according to your taste, without troubling yourself about those which belong more particularly to your office and the duties of your state, serving God according to your own fashion, not according to his will. This is a very frequent mistake made by numbers of persons, even among the devout.

Keep your heart detached from everything created, from place, time, even from the practice of particular virtuous acts, in order to attach it to God alone without reserve, and to seek no consolation, no rest, no honor and glory except in the Cross of our Saviour at whose feet

every one ought to sacrifice all his caprices, affections, aversions, passions, inclinations, in a word, his entire self; for, we must suffer and sacrifice much for God, if we wish to enjoy him.

Love particularly three kinds of crosses: First — those which on account of their long duration, become in the end annoying and irksome. “Those crosses which we meet with in the public streets,” said St. Francis de Sales, “are excellent, but those which we find at home are far more excellent, because they are heavier. They are better than iron-chains, disciplines, fasting and everything that has been invented by the spirit of austerity. In this the magnanimity of the children of the cross is manifested.”

Secondly — those which come without being sought for. These come from God; they are all filled with the perfume of the place from which they come. Wheresoever there is less of our own choice, there is more of the good pleasure of God. The cross which our Lord lays upon us is far preferable to the one which we lay upon ourselves. To carry our cross, means to embrace, with perfect submission to the divine will, all pains, troubles, contradictions, and mortifications of this life, the little ones as well as the great ones, no matter whether they are according to our liking or against it. We like to choose our own cross and leave another, we prefer a heavy one which strikes the eyes and is noticed by others, to a light one of which we become tired because it lasts so long. Illusion! We must carry *our* own cross — the one which presses upon us at present, — and not another. And its merit consists not in its quality, but in the degree of perfection with which it is borne. There is often more virtue in not saying an unlawful word, or in not casting a curious glance than in wearing a hair-shirt. Condescension to the humors of others and sweet but most reas-

enable forbearance with our neighbor, behold, what ought to be our cherished and special virtues. "O how much shorter work it is," said St. Francis de Sales, "to accommodate ourselves to others, than to wish to bend every one to our own humors and opinions."

A third kind of crosses which must be dear to us, are unjust vexations and persecutions. "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." They bear more resemblance to our Saviour and lead with him a hidden life in God; they are considered wicked, poor fools, though they are good, rich and wise; they are held in abomination by the wicked, but loved and blessed by the Lord. Persecutions are relics of our Saviour's Cross; we must not lose even the smallest particle.

Choose from among the different spiritual exercises one for more frequent practice, such as the presence of God, an exercise so highly commended by the saints, and so easily to be kept up by frequent but fervent ejaculations; or purity of intention; or submission to the divine will in all things, an exercise, which cannot be too highly esteemed; or self-abandonment into the hands of God, and self-renunciation, as any of these exercises includes generally all christian perfection.

In the same manner, choose one particular virtue, such as humility, gentleness, patience, mortification, prayer, mercy and the like, for special practice; this is something peculiar to all religious Institutes which cultivate some particular virtue which constitutes their spirit without neglecting the others. Upon these principles the saints would not augur well of those persons whom they saw fluttering from one exercise to another, from one book to another, from one practice to another; comparing them to drones who alight on every flower without extracting honey from

any, ever learning without ever attaining to the true science of the saints; always gathering, collecting and heaping up, without becoming rich, because they put everything into a bag with a hole; restless spirits who, seeking peace in spiritual riches, find it not.

Our law in everything must be the will of God; but it is not sufficient to will what God wills, we must also will it in the manner he wills, and in every one of its circumstances. For instance, when ill, we must will to suffer this particular complaint and not another, in this special place and at this time, as well as among such persons as it shall please God.

Such is the spirit of St. Francis, and those who live up to it, live and die as saints.

Some years ago there lived, in the South of Ireland, a poor, desolate old woman, named "Blind Ellen." While young and comparatively strong she contrived to be useful to the neighbors, knitting their socks and nursing their babies, but in her latter days, and for years before her death, the utmost she could do was to pray for her fellow-creatures. That she did this with all her heart and soul the people who remember her can tell. Having no home of her own she literally took up her abode in the church, and lived at the foot of the altar, arriving there early every morning, and staying till late in the evening when the chapel gates had to be closed and some one would come, often a little child, to lead her to whatever dwelling was to shelter her that night. She could sleep in a friend's barn, or at a kitchen fire, as well as in a bed when one could be offered her. In the middle of the day some one was likely to remember blind Ellen, and to send her a morsel of food, which she ate in the porch of the church. If all happened to forget her she knew how to fast. Day after day, as time went on, she was to be found kneeling on a step of the altar,

praying unceasingly for her friends, living and dead, and offering her humble and never failing homage to God. Was any one ill or troubled, threatened with misfortune or fallen into sin, a messenger was dispatched to Ellen in the church, to claim her prayers for the sufferers. Was any one dying, Ellen was called on to redouble her fervor, and to send up her most ardent supplications for the peace of the passing soul. She had great opportunities on days when confessions were heard in the church, for many of those, both young and old, who came out of the confessional could not read a prayer-book, and found themselves at a loss when the penance, perhaps a long one, which they did not know by heart, had to be said. Blind Ellen knew all the prayers (it was believed) that ever were composed in or out of a book, and she had them all on the tip of her tongue, and she was always at hand to give help. Was the Way of the Cross to be followed, round and round the church she would go on her knees with the penitent, reciting the prayers with intense earnestness, while her words were echoed by the youth or the girl, or maybe by the aged man or woman at her side. If the rosary, or the penitential psalms, or a litany had to be said she would put herself in front of the altar, with the penitent close to her, and there give out the pleading words right under the tabernacle. Ellen, groping her way round the old church, led by the strong young man or pretty maid who needed her precious help, was a familiar sight to all who came and went within the walls. Praying there alone on the altar steps with her darkened eyes fixed on the tabernacle, she seemed so completely a part of the sacredness of the place that when she died and disappeared, the very sanctuary seemed lonely without her. In the end she was found dead with her head leaning against the altar-rails, having passed away quietly, giving no trouble, nobody

having suspected that she was more than ordinarily weak or ill. The people who had been accustomed to rely on her help, and to feel themselves sustained by the prayers which they had not time or words to present to God for themselves and which she so freely offered for them, missed her sorrowfully out of their lives; and thus a poor creature had gained the rank of an apostle, who only for her fervent spirit, could have been for years but an atom of useless humanity burdening the rates in a poorhouse.

Even in a poorhouse, however, the same apostolic spirit will sometimes appear, and in the most unlikely subjects. In a certain house of the kind, I know one blind Mary Ann, upon whom the mantle of Ellen would seem to have descended. This poor soul, attended by a fresh, pleasant-faced girl, who is harmlessly silly, (or to put it as the French so tenderly express it, "an innocent,") spends her days going from one ward to another, reciting the rosary in a loud voice, that all may join who will, sometimes she recites the entire rosary as often as nine times in the course of the day. The "innocent" knows how to answer the prayers, which have a fascination for her, and all sweetness in life to her is found in following Mary Ann about and making hearty responses to her petitions to heaven. The coming of these two afflicted and helpless souls is looked for by numbers of their fellow-creatures, like the advent of angels; and when any one is sick unto death, Mary Ann and her simple acolite are sent for with all speed. Death seems to lose half its terrors when Mary Ann is there to pray. Into another of those terrible hotels for paupers, which are to so sad an extent the nurseries of crime in the land, an elderly woman, called Martha Green, found herself driven by a storm of misfortune, after long years of industry and helpfulness in a humble walk of life.

“Now, at last,” she thought, “my days of usefulness are over. If I were even able to move about through the wards I might be of some use in counselling those who have had fewer advantages in the way of instruction than myself.” But, alas! she was tied to a bed in the hospital, in a far corner, where even her voice could scarcely be heard by those in the other beds around her. Nevertheless, during the years she lingered in that spot, Martha became a powerful agent for good, and a large share of the work that ought to be done among us for God, in the course of each twenty-four hours, was intrusted to her daily by the angels. First, her patient prayers in the night, spoken aloud when she thought every one else asleep, were caught by one wakeful sufferer after another, till at last her fellow-patients used to lie awake to hear Martha praying. Then they began to ask her to speak to them during the day, and to tell them how it was that she contrived to be so happy and resigned. After some time it became the earnest desire of all the inmates of the hospital to get a bed beside Martha, and gradually she gathered near her all that were good and holy, and anxious to be good and holy, in the place. She had a little mission of her own in her corner of the poorhouse hospital, and sent many a soul on before her to watch for her coming in heaven.

Another still more touching case I know of is that of three poor women, who have their home in a mountain cabin in the north of Ireland. One is an aged creature who has no relations, and can not leave her bed, and, but for the help of her companions, must have been taken to the poorhouse long ago. The other two are young: one is blind, and the other is deaf and dumb. The three are bound by no ties of blood, and how they came together at first I do not know; but with the help of each to each they

manage to live, and are more happy and independent than many of their neighbors. The bed-ridden woman owns the cabin and shelters the other two; the blind girl knits, and the dumb girl works at other occupations, with the help and under the direction of her sister in misfortune. The two latter always go about together; the dumb maiden is eyes to the blind maiden, and she who is sightless is voice and intelligence to the mute. Blind Mary has taught silent Kate to understand what she says to her by watching the movement of her lips, and, incredible as it seems, the understanding between them is so perfect that on Sunday, when the priest speaks from the altar, Kate has only to turn to Mary and fix her keen eyes on the other's lips to learn from them at once what has been said. The blind and dumb girls, each according to her ability, tend and comfort the old woman in the bed, who gives them shelter; and thus these three patient creatures form together a little co-operative society of their own, which has certainly been established under difficulties.

The poor woman, with a large family, who sent a tiny child to a convent door with two eggs as her contribution to the fund collected for the Pope some years ago, was, I think, a true member of the band who knew how to surmount their difficulties. One can not but think it a pity the Pope could not have had those fresh eggs for his breakfast, but, doubtless, the sum of twopence which they fetched is marked down somewhere in the records kept above, side by side with that old entry of the Scriptural widow's mite. Such another mother as the heroine of the two eggs was she who sent out the little girl I met one morning, in a little country place, carrying a tin of milk to a sick neighbor. Knowing that the little maid with the pinched half-starved face, carrying the tin was one of nine children, including a

baby, and that the only cow of the family was nearly dry, I asked her how the household could part with all the milk they possessed. "Sure, she's sick, an' the thirst is on her!" was all the answer I could get. The need of the suffering neighbor was held of more importance than the hardly less urgent want at home.—*Rosa Mulholland in "Irish Monthly."*

All these persons lived, in their state of life, according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, and sanctified themselves. Every one who is firmly determined to please God and sanctify himself, can live up to this spirit, lead a holy life and die a saint, no matter under what circumstances of life he may be placed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES.

Man naturally and necessarily seeks happiness; but blinded and deluded by his passions, by his love of the honors, riches and pleasures of this life, he seeks his happiness where it is not to be found. In the eight beatitudes with which our divine Saviour commences his sermon on the Mount, he shows wherein true happiness consists, and by what means we may obtain it. He lays down eight great truths as the foundations of that sublime morality which he came to teach us, and which are the sure way to a happy life here below, and also to eternal happiness hereafter.

The first beatitude is: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." There is indeed a great contrast between the beatitudes which the world proclaims, and those proclaimed by Jesus Christ. The world says, "Blessed are the rich." Our Lord says, "Blessed are the poor"; not exactly the poor by birth, but the poor in spirit, that is, those who are detached from earthly wealth and honors, those, who for the love of God, renounce all things to follow Christ by embracing the religious life; those really poor persons who, here below have to endure labors, hardships, humiliations, contempt, privations and destitution and afflictions of all kinds, and bear their crosses and trials with patience and resignation to the holy will of God, and are content with their condition — these persons, after their short pilgrimage on earth, will be

exalted, enriched, and united with their God in the possession of eternal glory. Their kingdom, their elevation is not in this world. Our divine Saviour tells them to look forward to that happy kingdom which is to be their everlasting inheritance; "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Such a blessedness is also promised to those of the rich who are detached in heart and affection from their possessions. Their manners are simple and natural, free from all silly pride and affectation. Their hands are open to the poor; but their alms are given in secret. They do not boast of the sums they have given. You do not see their names or their generosity paraded in the newspapers. "Their left hand knows not what the right hand does." They visit the sick in the hospitals, in the hovels of the poor; they console the suffering and dying; they are friends to the poor widow, and fathers to the fatherless. They contribute liberally towards the support of religion.

These three classes of the poor in spirit—the voluntary poor, the actual poor perfectly resigned to God's will, and the rich who are really poor in spirit—are called blessed by our Lord, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven, that is, they even in this life, having neither fear nor anxiety, live in great peace, which is a foretaste of heaven. They always sing joyfully the hymn of the poor in spirit:

What to me are earthly treasures,
Flashing gems and gleaming gold?
Gems and gold heal not the heart-ache,
Gleam in vain where love grows cold.
Thou, dear Lord, art my heart's Treasure,
Thy pure love is all I prize;
Thou hast boundless wealth unfailing
In thy home beyond the skies.

Earthly joys soon end in sorrow ;
 Pleasure brings but grief and pain ;
 Beauty's bloom is frail and fleeting ;—
 Darkness and the grave remain !
 Thy sweet smile, dear Lord, brings gladness ;
 Thy love's sweetness ne'er can cloy ;
 Thy immortal, dazzling beauty
 Fills all heaven with endless Joy.

Earthly fame dies with its echo,
 Earthly lore but half reveals
 Life's dread meaning, man's deep blindness,
 And the fate that death conceals !
 Thou, dear Lord, art all my Glory,
 Praised by thee, I shall be blest,
 In thy wisdom's cloudless splendors
 Shall my yearning soul find rest.

Second Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." "Blessed are the meek," not those who, from natural temperament or stoical indifference, quietly bear the evils of life ; but those who, though naturally fiery and passionate, have obtained a mastery over impatience, anger, desire of revenge and all other feelings incompatible with peace of heart. Meekness, mildness, and gentleness of temper, are amiable dispositions, and when manifested under insults, violence, oppression, injuries, or any other ill-treatment, they show the *true Christian* ; they make a person pleasing to God, and beloved by men ; and promote his happiness both here and hereafter : "Do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men." (Eccli. iii. 19.) "Blessed are the meek, *for they shall possess the land.*" They shall hold earthly possessions in peace, being beloved and esteemed by all ; they shall possess the land of their own hearts, being masters of their own actions, (for the angry man is not his own master) ; they shall possess by right of heritage the land of the living-

heaven, according to the words of David, "I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." (Ps. 26, 13.)

A few years ago there was a poor wretched woman, who hated the rich and hated God with all the intense, obstinate hatred of a wicked woman's heart. She bore a special hatred to the women of high rank, to whom she gave the most odious titles. "Remember," she used to say to her children, "that I have brought you up to humble the rich, to bring down their pride. If I find one among you, who does not hate the rich, I shall disown him."

A good priest heard of this woman. He sent one of his penitents, a young marquise, virtuous and beloved by every one, to tame this wild beast and to win her heart.

The lady visited her, bore all her insults with wonderful patience and finally succeeded in calming her fierce passions.

One day the young marquise, having to leave the city for a few weeks, came to bid good bye to her protégée. She shook hands with her warmly, and finally inspired by her kind heart as well as by the grace of God, she threw her arms around the neck of the unfortunate woman and embraced her tenderly. She then departed, telling the woman, that she should visit her again on her return.

The poor woman stood there for a moment as if stupefied with astonishment, then burst into tears. She immediately hastened to the good priest, who had sent the marquise: "Would you believe it, Father," she cried, scarcely able to speak, "And yet I assure you it is true. Indeed she actually embraced me. Yes, the good marquise embraced a miserable wretch as I am. O Father! I often said, that there was no God. Now I tell you that there is a God, and this lady is certainly one of the Angels of the good God.

I often said that I would never go to confession. Now I am willing to go to confession as often as you please." And in fact, from that moment the poor woman became an excellent Christian.

Next day the priest wrote to the virtuous lady: "You are indeed very fortunate, Madame. We priests have to preach and labor so hard for the conversion of sinners, and yet we succeed so seldom. You have converted this woman simply by embracing her." O great power of meekness!

Third Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." To mourn, to lament, to weep, seem to earthly-minded persons to indicate any thing but happiness and comfort; they seek their comfort in earthly pleasures and festive enjoyments. But our Lord tells us that *they* only have *true* happiness or comfort, who mourn who are full of compunction, who delight in weeping before God over the miseries of their exile, the wounds of their soul, and especially at the thought of the many injuries done to God, of the many souls who are falling every instant into hell. "They who sow *in tears*, shall reap in joy;" (Ps. 125, 5.), and therefore "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," in this life by the unction of grace, and by the unspeakable sweetness which is found in the tears of compunction. "I have found greater happiness," said St. Augustin, "in weeping at the foot of my crucifix than I found in theatres;" yes, they shall be comforted without end or measure in heaven.

Look at the holy mourner on his death-bed. O what a heavenly peace upon his brow! What a sweet, calm light shines around him! It is a ray of heaven's glory. The pearly gates are ajar; and light and music and song float out upon his enraptured ear. Pain is soothed, and death appears like an angel of light crowned with flowers,—who

tells the weary pilgrim to hasten for "the bridegroom calls, the marriage feast is ready." The cold hands of the pilgrim grasp the image of his crucified master, and his dying lips whisper those words of confidence: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." A sweet smile yet rests upon his face even after the soul has departed and the holy Church follows him, with her consoling prayer: "Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine unto him. May he rest in peace."

Fourth Beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall be filled."

There is one. He is not willing to undergo any kind of mortifications, or to be under restraint or to live in subjection. He labors only for his own interest and considers what gain he may reap from another. He likes to be honored and respected; but is afraid of being put to shame and despised. He is a lover of idleness and bodily rest. He endeavors to have things that are curious and fine, and abhors things that are cheap and coarse. He is delighted in temporal things, rejoices at earthly gain, is troubled at losses and is provoked at a slight injurious word. He is covetous, and more willing to take than to give and love, to have all things to himself. He is absorbed in creatures, in vanities and entertainments. He does all for his own benefit, and interest. He can do nothing gratis, but hopes to gain something equal or better for his good deeds, and desires to have his actions and gifts highly valued and praised. Such is the natural man, the man destitute of the divine influence of grace. Such a man feels no hunger and thirst for justice, that is, he does not desire nor seek to become just and holy. There is another he studies how to mortify himself, resists sensuality, seeks subjection, aims at not following his own liberty, loves to live under discipline,

and desires not to have the command over any one, but under God ever to live, stand and be, and for God's sake is ever ready to bow down himself under all human creatures. He considers not what may be advantageous and profitable to himself, but rather what may be profitable to many. He faithfully attributes all honor and glory to God, and is glad to suffer reproach for the sake of Jesus. He abhors idleness and willingly embraces labor. He is pleased with that which is plain and humble. He attends to things eternal and cleaves not to those which pass with time; neither is he disturbed at the loss of things nor exasperated with hard words, for he has placed his joy and treasure in heaven, where nothing is lost. He is bountiful and charitable, avoids selfishness, is contended with little and judges himself more happy in being able to give than to receive. He feels drawn to God and to a virtuous life. He renounces creatures, flies worldly amusements, detests the desires of the flesh, restrains the wandering about of his imagination and does not like to appear in public. For all he does he requires no other recompense than God alone. He loves his enemies and is not puffed up with having many friends. He rather favors the poor than the rich; he has more compassion for the innocent than the powerful. He rejoices in the truth and hates deceit. He desires not to be praised and flattered, but wishes that God may be blessed by all. It is such a man that Jesus Christ calls blessed. He tastes, even in this life the peace and joy of divine consolations, and after this life he will be filled with the abundance of heavenly delight.

Fifth Beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Blessed, says our Lord, are those, who have compassion on the sufferings of others, who try to help them, not from mere natural motives, but for the love

of Jesus Christ; who convert sinners and bring them back to God; who instruct the ignorant, root out sinful prejudices, teach the truths of faith which men are so much determined to misrepresent and even to deny. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy are enjoined on us by our Lord who says: "Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your heavenly Father also is merciful." (Luke vi., 36.) On the day of judgment he will say to the merciful: "Come ye blessed of my Father; I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv., 34.) See "Greatest Commandment" p. 86 to p. 213.)

Sixth Beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." There are different degrees of purity of heart. The first is freedom from mortal sin; the second, freedom from deliberate venial sin and all affection for sin; the third, freedom from the least ill-regulated affection; the fourth, freedom from those imperceptible stains which hinder our entrance into heaven; the fifth consists in that perfect purity of intention by which the soul sees, feels and loves nothing but God. Great is the reward promised to this last degree — they shall see God; in this world, by the great light given to them, and in the other, by the beatific vision which will be in proportion to those different degrees:

The pure of heart

Has joys no tongue hath spoken,
Joys sweeter than the world can give!
To him alone

The mystic seal is broken;

God's works to him all speak and live!

The flow'rs that bloom,

The stars that brightly shine on high,

Sing e'er to him:

"The pure of heart shall never die!"

The plashing waves,

The soft winds gently murmur:

"The pure of heart shall never die!"

The crystal stream
 As in a dream low singing
 In sun and shade, through mead and dell
 The merry birds
 Their flight as light swift winging,
 To him alone their secrets tell.
 The forest leaves
 In accents whisper soft and low :
 "Blest are the pure
 In heaven above, on earth below!"
 Ah yes! the pure
 Has joys no tongue hath spoken,
 Joys sweeter than the world can know!

The maiden pure
 Shines with a beauty rarer
 Than gold or costly robes can lend,
 Upon her brow
 A Jewel shines far fairer
 Than all the sparkling gems of Ind' !
 The pure of heart
 Fears not the grave; an angel bright
 With roses crowned,
 Calls him to heav'n and endless light!
 The shroud, the pall
 To hearts defiled and earthly,—
 The pure has joy and life and light!

The pure of heart
 With God's own fond love burning,
 Lives for the poor, the weak, the lone.
 From earthly pride
 And earthly pleasures turning,
 He seeks sad hearts that weep and moan.
 The Food of Life
 Gives him new strength and peace and joy,
 The Food of Love
 Gives sweetness that can never cloy.
 Ah, yes, the pure
 Has joys no tongue hath spoken,
 The pure alone has life and joy!
 Thrice happy the pure heart!
 T'is God's hallowed rest.
 On earth and in heaven
 The pure heart is blest.

Seventh Beatitude: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

The world praises those who know how to wage war against their enemies and conquer them. Our Lord, on the contrary, calls those blessed who put an end to wars and dissensions by restoring peace among those who live at enmity. It is, indeed, very difficult to prevail upon such men to be reconciled with one another and with God; but to try to bring about their reconciliation is a work so pleasing to God that those who are engaged in it, shall be especially worthy to be called "the children of God."

There are three reasons why the peace-makers shall be called the children of God. The first reason is because they greatly resemble God, their heavenly Father, and are very dear to him; for God exceedingly loves peace. He is called the "God of peace." (Phil. iv.) He sent his well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to restore peace between him and mankind. Those, on the contrary, who sow discord among men are the children of satan, because they destroy charity, which is the mother of all virtues.

Another reason why the peace-makers shall be called the children of God, is because, by restoring peace among men, they perform the office of Christ, the Son of God, who came upon earth to reconcile men with God and with one another, and give that peace of the soul, which the world cannot give. (II. Cor. v. 18.) Hence it was that the angels, at his birth, sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." (Luke ii. 14.)

The third reason why the peace-makers shall be called the children of God is, because, by the merit they have acquired in restoring peace in the souls of men, they are the heirs to the celestial glory of God; for in heaven all the

saints are made the children and heirs of God by the enjoyment of the beatific vision.

Now, there are different degrees of this beatitude. The first is, to make peace in our own souls by subduing our passions, and receiving the sacraments frequently.

The second degree is, to endeavor to make and maintain peace with our neighbor: "If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) "*it be possible*," i. e., if we can have peace with them, without purchasing it at the expense of truth and virtue.

The third degree is to restore peace among those who live at variance with one another.

The fourth degree is to prevail upon others to be peacemakers and restore charity and union among those who live at enmity.

One day Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice was requested to give a mission in Castel d'aqua, where the people were divided into two factions. There were more than two hundred people in arms, and a massacre was hourly expected. When the saintly missionary beheld these people on the high roads and on the hill side all armed and ready to fight, the man of God could not refrain from shedding tears, but he lost no time in doing all in his power to bring about a reconciliation among them. He began by entreating them to lay down their arms during the mission, and then tried hard by preaching and by private exhortation to restore peace among them. They all attended the mission; but the church appeared more like a battle field than the house of God; for on one side appeared one faction and on the opposite side was the other faction, equally numerous and also in arms, and between the two factions was the missionary on the platform. He addressed both parties with great prudence and moderation, for fear that,

these bitter enemies found themselves face to face, they would take to arms and slay one another in his very presence. This was the scene every day in the church, and seeing that he could not succeed in restoring among these misguided people the peace which he so much desired, he resolved to leave them. The day for preaching the last sermon arrived. He ascended the platform with the intention of taking leave of them, when suddenly both parties came forward towards each other and extended their hands as a token of peace. The joy of Blessed Leonard was indescribable. He had the *Te Deum* chanted to thank God for having softened the hearts of these people. They laid aside their arms; all were reconciled and peace was restored.

It is well to know that St. Stephen has, in many instances, proved himself a powerful intercessor and patron for those who undertake the difficult work of reconciling enemies.

In a certain city of Spain, two of the principal inhabitants bore a mortal hatred to each other, and thereby divided the whole into two hostile parties. The streets were often the scene of bloody encounters and ruthless murders. The bishop of the place and even the king himself had tried to put an end to these disgraceful feuds; but in vain. At last it was resolved to give a mission in the place. The missionaries came. When they heard of the two hostile parties, they resolved to erect in the church an altar in honor of the great martyr St. Stephen, in order to obtain, through his intercession, the grace of reconciliation of the two hostile parties.

So in the opening sermon, one of the missionaries told the people that he had looked in vain in their city for an altar erected to the great martyr St. Stephen. "Now my

brethren," continued he, "we wish to supply the defect. We wish to erect in this church an altar to the first christian martyr. You must aid us in this good work. You must especially procure us a beautiful picture of St. Stephen, for we do not know where to find one. Whoever will get this picture for us will have a special share in the graces and indulgences of the mission." The missionary then spoke of the importance of saving their immortal souls.

Scarcely had the missionary finished his sermon, when one of the ring-leaders who had been greatly affected by his words came to him and said: "Reverend Father, there is a very beautiful picture of St. Stephen in town; but it belongs to my enemy. If you send somebody to him, perhaps he will lend it to you for the altar." "Excellent," said the missionary; "I shall call on him immediately, but I want you to accompany me." "I?" said the man surprised; "why, this is impossible! He is a bitter enemy. He will not only insult me, but your reverence also." "Do not fear," said the priest; "come with me, you shall be welcome. This is clearly the work of God."

They went together to the house of the other ring-leader. They were kindly received. "We intend," said the priest, addressing him, "to erect an altar in honor of St. Stephen. I have heard, that you have a beautiful picture of the Saint, and I have come to request you to lend it to us during the mission." "Most willingly," answered the ring-leader. "I will not only lend it to you, I will bring it to the church myself, and this gentleman, pointing to his old enemy, "will have the kindness to help me to carry it." He immediately took down the picture and the two enemies bore it triumphantly through the streets to the church. The people, who beheld this miracle of grace, could hardly believe their eyes.

The two factions, inspired by the good example of their leaders, now vied with each other in erecting and adorning the altar. In a few days every trace of ill-feeling had disappeared; the most perfect harmony reigned everywhere.

Eighth Beatitude: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because your reward is very great in heaven; for so they persecuted the prophets that were before you." (Matt. v. 11, 12.) Rejoice, says the Lord of heaven and earth, when you are calumniated, persecuted, and falsely accused of being rebels, and innovators, superstitious men who believe in a crucified God and worship him as their supreme Lord and Master; for such sufferings make you blessed, obtain for you an exceedingly great reward in heaven, render you similar to the prophets, who were men of sublime sanctity, such as Isaias, whom king Manasses had sawed into two; Jeremiah who was stoned to death by the Jews; and the rest of the prophets who underwent similar persecutions and died under the same.

To suffer persecution for justice' sake, that is, in the cause of truth and virtue, or for Christ's sake, that is, for believing and following the doctrine of Christ, for professing it publicly and spreading it everywhere, is the last and highest degree of beatitude; it is the most perfect sacrifice of ourselves which we can make to our Creator; and, consequently, it "works for us above measure, exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory." (II. Cor. iv. 17.) Convinced of this truth, the Apostles esteemed it as a great favor, when God permitted them to be persecuted: "They went from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were ac-

counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts v. 41.) "My brethren (says St. James), count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations" (i. e., trials and persecutions): "knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work." (James i. 2, 3, 4.) "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II. Tim. iii. 12.)

One day St. Francis of Assisi was asked: "In what is perfect joy found?" He answered: "Perfect joy is not found in great learning, or wisdom, or in the gift of miracles; it is not found in being looked upon as a great saint, nor in converting all infidels: perfect joy is found only in being deemed worthy, to suffer cheerfully hunger and thirst, cold and heat, insults and calumnies, all kinds of tortures and afflictions, for Christ's sake; for the greatest of all blessings is to suffer for God's sake, because in all other gifts we cannot glory, for they are the gifts of God and not our own; but to suffer for God's sake, afflictions and tribulations is a blessing in which we can glory, for it is as it were our own." Hence the apostle St. Paul said: "God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)

These considerations consoled and encouraged the martyrs and saints of all ages to suffer cheerfully for the cause of truth. In the first ages of the Church, in the reign of the tyrants, there were so many millions, and among them so many tender virgins and children, who, rather than deny the faith of Jesus Christ, embraced with joy torments and death. Sulpitius Severus writes, (lib. 11, cap. xlvi.) that in the time of Diocletian, the martyrs presented themselves to their judges with a desire of martyrdom that surpassed the eagerness with which men of the world pursue the dignities and riches of this earth.

The martyrdom of St. Mauritius, and the whole Theban legion, is one famous in history. The Emperor Maximin commanded all his soldiers to assist at an impious sacrifice which he was going to offer to his false deities. St. Mauritius and his soldiers, because they were all Christians, refused to obey the order of the Emperor. Having heard of their refusal, Maximin, to punish their disobedience, ordered them to be decimated, — that is, the head of every tenth man in the legion to be cut off. Each of them desired to die; and the soldiers who were left alive envied the happiness of those who were put to death for Jesus Christ. As soon as this was made known to Maximin, he ordered them to be decimated a second time, but this only increased their desire of martyrdom. In the end the tyrant ordered them all to be beheaded; and all, with joy in their faces, laid down their arms, and, like so many meek lambs, gladly, and without resistance, submitted to death.

Prudentius relates that a child of seven years old, whose name is unrecorded, was tempted by Asclepiades to deny the faith of Christ: but when the boy refused, saying that he had been taught this faith by his mother, the tyrant sent for her, and in her presence caused the child to be scourged till his whole body became one wound. All the spectators shed tears of pity; but the mother exulted with joy at the sight of the fortitude of her son. Before death, the child, being thirsty, asked his mother for a little water. "Son," said the mother, "have patience a little while, you shall soon be satiated in heaven with every delight." The prefect, enraged at the constancy of the mother and the son, commanded his head to be cut off instantly. After the execution of the order, the mother took the dead child in her arms, and kissed him with feelings of the most joyful triumph, because he had laid down his life for Jesus Christ.

St. Agnes died the death of martyrdom at the age of thirteen. Her riches and beauty excited the young noblemen of the first families in Rome to vie with one another in their addresses, who should gain her in marriage. But she had consecrated her virginity to Jesus Christ whom she loved most tenderly from her childhood. Hence neither the allurements of her suitors, nor the importunities of her friends, nor the threats of the tyrant could prevail upon her to change her resolutions and become unfaithful to her heavenly bridegroom Jesus Christ.

When her suitors said to her :

“Thou art still young and fair, so fair !
 The world is bright and rich and gay,
 And tender — loving hearts are there—
 Wilt thou leave all to fade unseen away ?”

She answered :

“In prayers and tears the choice I’ve taken,
 The choice I can ne’er ne’er regret ;
 The heartless world, I’ve long forsaken,
 Its nameless sorrows haunt me yet.
 The worldling’s aimless, dreary life ;
 Its mocking hopes and trembling fears,
 Its envy, hate and sickening strife,
 Brief joys—and then—an endless night of tears.”

When her friends spoke to her :

“Behold ! a bridegroom stands before thee,
 So rich and young, so fond, so fair,
 He vows, he e’er shall love, adore thee,
 He brings bright gems to deck thy hair.”

She said :

“The Bridegroom of my soul is fairer,
 Than aught on earth or heaven beside
 He has bright gems, far richer, rarer
 Than ocean caves or mountains hide.
 For me in pain and shame he died,
 His pure love burns for me alway
 If here sharp thorns my pathway hide,
 On high I’ll reign, mid light and bliss for aye.

When the tyrant said to her :

“Deny this Christ who leaves thee to such a dreadful doom,
 And bow in adoration before the gods of Rome ;
 One single act of worship and we will loose thy bands,
 And give thee life and freedom with all thy wealth and lands !”
 “She answers firmly, mildly : One God I worship now,
 To blind and senseless idols my soul can never bow.
 To thee, o blessed Jesus, who canst redeem and save,
 Who ope’d the gates of glory and triumphed o’er the grave,
 To thee my life I offer in steadfast faith I come ;
 Accept my humble tribute, and call thy servant home.”

Then she said to her friends :

“Farewell, dear friends, we now must part,
 For God I die with willing heart.
 I see sad tears bedim your eye—
 Weep not for me ! “Tis sweet to live, more sweet to die !
 Weep not for me ! Fond hearts, farewell !
 Soon shall our grief be o’er :
 In heaven we’ll meet once more !

Farewell, dear land, that gave me birth,
 My home, the dearest spot on earth !
 Kind friends, bear home my parting sigh :
 “For God to live is sweet ; more sweet, more blest to die !”
 Farewell, green hills, bright skies, farewell !
 O scene surpassing rare !
 But heaven is far more fair !

Farewell, fond mother ! Bless thy child !
 Farewell, dear father, good and mild.
 Rejoice with me ; repress each sigh,
 And pray that I may falter not, may bravely die !
 Farewell, fond hearts—farewell, farewell !
 A crown of heavenly light
 Gleams o’er me dazzling bright !

With clear eyes raised to Heaven she kneels in silent prayer,
 And hears triumphal music resounding through the air ;
 She sees the glorious city whose portals open stand,
 Revealing to her vision the noble martyr land
 That she so soon should follow, while angels trooping down
 The sky, are twining lilies around her palm and crown.

Upon the blood stained marble she meekly bows her head ;
 To her the spot is holy, there countless saints have bled ;
 She thinks how Jesus suffered, mocked, scourged and crucified,
 How, loving and forgiving, He blessed his foes and died
 To die for Him is heaven, no terror can she feel ;
 A moment more, above her bright gleams the flashing steel.

One quick, convulsive quiver. The golden head lies low,
 And o'er the snowy raiment the crimson life-drops flow ;
 A lamb upon the altar untouched by sinful stain,
 Such seems the gentle victim—her death is not in vain.
 The warm, bright current gushing from out her pure heart's tide
 Baptize a thousand Christians where she for Christ has died.

● One day our Lord said to a pious virgin: "I have something for sale." "What is it, O Lord?" she asked. "The kingdom of heaven," he answered. "What is the price for it?" she asked. He answered:

"I will let you have a kingdom for poverty of spirit; a country of constant happiness for the practice of meekness; every kind of consolation for mourning over your own sins and those of others; the gratification of all your desires for hungering and thirsting after holiness of life; every kind of graces for performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; the beatific vision for purity of heart; the right of being my child for establishing peace in your soul as well as in the souls of your fellow-men; my eternal life for losing yours on my account. Begin, then, to practise poverty or humility of spirit which inclines you to be meek; meekness inclines you to mourn; for he who is meek keenly feels his own miseries as well as those of others, and weeps over the same; mourning or compunction of heart enkindles in you hunger and thirst for a constant increase in virtue and holiness of life; hunger and thirst for holiness of life induce you to practise the works of mercy by which holiness of life is greatly increased; mercy and charity purify your heart more and

more from the stains and defilements of sin, and inflame it with increasing love of me; purity of heart impels you to establish the peace of God in yourself as well as in others; for, as wars and dissensions arise from hearts impure and full of bad, earthly desires, so, on the contrary, the true peace of God proceeds from hearts pure and free from earthly desires. If you practise these beatitudes you will be hated and persecuted by the wicked. By enduring patiently the persecution of the wicked, you will perfect the crown of the eight beatitudes and decorate yourself with it for all eternity."

Dear Christian, it is to you that our Lord thus speaks in the eight beatitudes. What is your answer?

CHAPTER XV.

Useful Questions and Answers regarding Our
Divine Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, rendered themselves and all mankind unhappy by eating of the forbidden fruit in Paradise. This sin subjected them to unspeakable evils of body and soul. God, however, left them one consolation. He cursed the serpent which had led them into sin, and promised to send them a Redeemer after a certain time, who would repair all the great evils of their sin; he also told them that he would forgive them on account of the Redeemer, and save them if they would remain faithful to him to the end of their life. This promise exceedingly consoled our first parents. During the remainder of their life they did penance for their sin. They told their children of the happy state in which they had lived for some time, and how they came to lose it through their own fault. They also told them that God had promised a Redeemer who would save them by his power.

But it was not only to our first parents that God made this promise; he repeated it also to the holy patriarchs, especially to Abraham, Jacob and David, to whom he promised that the Messiah (Redeemer) should be born of their race. This was the general belief of the Jews, and the prophets who foretold the wonders and blessings of the Redeemer to come, and ceased not to beseech God with sighs and tears to hasten his coming. "Send forth, O Lord," says the prophet Isaias, "the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth."

(xvi. 1.) "Send forth dew from above, and let the clouds rain down the just: let the earth be opened, and produce the Saviour." (xlv. 8.) In fine, the Redeemer was expected by all nations. (Gen. xlix. 10.) They sighed after him as slaves do after their deliverer. The Jews most firmly believed in the coming of the Redeemer and therefore gave him the name of "*Him that was to come*," and for this very reason they said to St. John the Baptist: "Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.)

Now when the time was come, says St. Paul, in which God from all eternity had resolved to give us the promised Redeemer, "he sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4.)

All the time before the birth of our Redeemer, was, as it were, void of grace; but the time after his birth is full of grace, and is on this account justly called the law of grace, because the inexhaustible fountain of grace—our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is given us. He came to deliver us from the slavery of sin, and the power of the devil; he came to reconcile us with his heavenly Father and make us his children by adoption, and to open to us the gate of heaven which was shut against us by the sin of our first parents.

If we consider that God alone could raise man from his fall; that for the offence committed a satisfaction was to be made; that this satisfaction was to be accompanied with pains and sufferings; that God of his own nature is impassible: then we must be in admiration of the infinite wisdom of God, which found the means to reconcile all these difficulties by the Incarnation of his Son who by uniting the divine and human nature in one person,

wrought the salvation of mankind. This was undoubtedly a most admirable work of the wisdom and goodness of God, and nothing can more manifest his power and greatness.

The creation of the world, says St. Augustine, is a great work; it manifests the omnipotence of God; but the redemption of mankind manifests the power of God in a different manner. The royal prophet calls the creation of the world the work of God's fingers, and the redemption of mankind the work of God's arm.

But the redemption of mankind is not only a greater mark of the power and greatness of God than the creation; it is also a special mark of the greatness and dignity of man, and of the great esteem God has for him. Hence the Church addresses God in these words: "O God, who hast formed the excellency of human nature in a wonderful manner, and hast repaired it in a manner still more wonderful. Undoubtedly, God did much for man when he created him; but he did far more for man when he redeemed him. "God," says St. Leo, "raised man very high when he created him according to his own image and likeness, but he raised man far higher when he condescended to assume not only the appearance, but even the very nature of man." Hence it is that the Church exclaims; "O happy necessity of the sin of Adam that was blotted out by the death of Jesus!" Jesus Christ has given us more than Adam took from us. We have gained more by the redemption than we have lost by sin. God's grace was not measured by man's sin. Where sin abounded, grace abounded still more." (Rom. v. 20.)

We cannot sufficiently describe the advantages and treasures which we have in Jesus Christ. To do this it would be necessary to be endowed, as St. Paul was, "with

the grace of announcing to all nations the inestimable riches of Jesus Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.) Does not our Saviour himself tell us how difficult it is to understand these inestimable riches? "If thou didst know the gift of God," said he to the Samaritan woman, "and who it is who saith to thee, give me to drink." (John iv. 10.) If we knew the gift which God has bestowed upon us in giving us his only Son; if we knew the gift which contains all other gifts; if we could understand its greatness and excell'ence, how happy should we not be? St. Augustine, who was especially favored by grace to know this gift, said in the transport of his zeal and thanksgiving: "He, O Lord, who is ungrateful for the benefit of creation, deserves hell; but a special hell should be created for him who is ungrateful for the benefit of redemption."

It is related of Father Avila that he always meditated on this great benefit of God. Hence, when persons spoke to him in admiration of particular favors they had received from God's goodness, he said: "What we ought to admire far more is that God hath so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) God has shown the greatness of his love towards us by the greatness of the gift which he has bestowed upon us. The infinite price of the one manifests the infinite excess of the other. How boundless is not the love of God for us in giving us his Son to ransom us by his death? "O wonderful excess of goodness," says the church to the eternal Father, "O inestimable effect of charity! Thou hast delivered up thy Son, in order to redeem a slave!"

Now, to ignore and forget this excess of the love of God the Father for mankind, to ignore and forget the treasures which we have in his well beloved Son Jesus Christ is to be lost forever. The enemies of God and mankind —

secret societies — use godless education, impious literature, and other devilish means to efface from the mind of the people the knowledge of Christ, and make of them perfect heathens, and worshipers of the devil.

The Catholic Church, on the contrary, uses different ways and means to make Christ known and loved. She has her daily sacrifice of the Mass which is a renewal of the Incarnation, Birth, Life, Passion, Death, Resurrection and all the wondrous works of Christ; she has her feasts of Christ to commemorate the mysteries of the life of our divine Saviour; she has her devotion of the way of the Cross, and of the holy Rosary, her Lenten exercises, especially those of Holy Week to remind her children of the life and passion of Christ; she has her schools in which she teaches her little ones the doctrine of Christ; she has her liturgy, her ceremonies and rites to teach her children by signs; she has the lives of her saints which are the Gospel of Christ in practice; she exhorts her children to have devout pictures and images, representing the different mysteries of the life of Christ; she has her temples to which her children go to adore Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and hear the Word of Christ; in a word, the holy Catholic Church leaves nothing undone to make Christ known and loved; for she knows that no one can be saved without the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

All those who are really desirous to be saved and sanctified are eager to acquire as much knowledge of Christ as possible. The better they know him, the more they love him. Hence the following questions and answers regarding our Lord Jesus Christ will be to them of great interest and benefit. These questions and answers are taken from the Compendium of St. Thomas' Theology.

Q. 1. Was it suitable that the Son of God should become man for our redemption and salvation ?

A thing is suitable to a being when it is conformable to the existence of the being. Thus, for instance, it suits the nature and existence of man to act, to reason, to discuss, because man is a rational being. Now, nothing is more suitable to God than to be good.

Goodness is the distinctive sign and the very essence of divine nature. And, as it is the nature of goodness to be communicated to others, it was suitable to the bounty, wisdom, justice, power, and glory of the Lord of heaven and earth to be spiritually communicated to man by the union of divine and human nature, which God has mercifully accomplished by the Incarnation of his adorable Son, and which is a manifestation of his love for all mankind.

“For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have life everlasting.” (John iii. 16.)

Q. 2. Was it absolutely necessary that the Son of God should become man for our redemption and salvation ?

God, in his infinite power, wisdom and mercy, could have employed other means for the redemption of man; but the mystery of the divine Incarnation was the most efficacious to deliver him from sin and hell, re-instate him in his original condition, and make him truly love God and his neighbor. Hence it is the general opinion of the most eminent theologians that, without the fall of man and the power of the devil, the Son of God would not have assumed human nature.

Q. 3. If the Incarnation was so absolutely necessary for the human race, why did not Jesus Christ come sooner, and even at the commencement of the world ?

In the first place the Word was not to be made flesh

before the fall of our first parents; for, a man in sound, perfect health needs no remedies. After the fall of our first parents it was necessary to make man sensible of his pride which was the cause of his moral perdition. Hence, God left man to his own free will and the law of nature; and when this was nearly effaced from his heart and mind, God gave him the written law.

When these laws became insufficient for the enlightenment and moral direction of the human race, reason and sound philosophy loudly proclaimed that the world could be saved only by a divine mediator.

The order of divine Providence is justice and perfection in all things, and God realized it in giving us successively the law of nature, the written law, and finally, the author of all grace and truth. "But when the plenitude of time was come, God sent his Son that he might redeem them that were under the law and receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4, 5.)

If the Incarnation had taken place at the beginning of the world, what would the Christian faith be at the end of ages? "But when the Son of man cometh, do you think he shall find faith on earth?" (Luke, xviii, 8.)

So the Saviour of the world came at the most favorable time for the redemption of the human race, and prepared them for his coming by a long expectation. Hence St. Augustine says that Christ wished to appear among men and preach his doctrine to them only at the time and place where he knew there would be people to believe in him. "In the midst of years, O Lord, thou shalt manifest thy great work." (Habaeuc, iii. 2.)

Q. 4. How was the union of the Divine Word with human nature accomplished?

This union was accomplished in the person of the Word.

The nature of a being is the perfect union of all his essential qualities, the substance and specific form in which it subsists. Two natures taken in this sense can be united to each other in a material form, as stones heaped together, or as different materials employed in building a house; but God, who is without limit and form, was not thus united with human nature. It would be rank heresy to believe that the union of two natures in Jesus Christ was but accidental and not substantial. Divine nature is immutable, and cannot, therefore, be changed into another, nor another nature changed into the divine nature, as, otherwise, it would follow that Jesus Christ, composed of such union, would have the form neither of his heavenly Father nor of his mother. The two natures are not confounded, but remain perfect in their union and essence; for Jesus Christ is God of the substance of his Father, and is man of the substance of his mother, and is, therefore, perfect God and perfect man at the same time. Hence it is evident that the union of the eternal Word with human nature did not take place in such a manner that there would be but one nature in Jesus Christ. So, then, it was not in one nature, but in the person of Jesus Christ that the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished.

The divine person assumed human nature. The word assume comprises two things in this case, namely: a principle and its effect. The principle was a person, for acts appertain to persons. The effect proceeded from divine nature common to the three adorable persons. So, then, it is the eternal Wisdom of the Word incarnate that assumed and raised human nature to a participation of divine nature.

Q. 5. Was it the second Person alone that could assume human nature, or could the Father and the Holy Ghost do the same?

The first principle of the assumption of human nature is divine power; but power, wisdom, and goodness are equal in each of the three divine Persons. Therefore, the Father and the Holy Ghost could have assumed human nature, as well as the second Person; otherwise the three divine persons could not be co-equal, consubstantial, and co-eternal in power, wisdom, and glory. Hence the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished by the co-operation of the three adorable Persons of the Divinity.

Q. 6. Is there any particular reason why the Son of God became man rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost?

The object of his Incarnation is to complete the number of those destined for the celestial inheritance, and inheritance is due only to legitimate and obedient children. "And if sons, heirs also of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) Hence it was fit and necessary that man should have received his adoption from him who is the Son according to nature. "All things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ." (II. Cor. v. 18.)

Moreover, wisdom, which constitutes the perfection of man, is a participation of divine Wisdom, and the Word made flesh is the power and Wisdom of God. (I. Cor. i. 24.)

"The Word of God on high is the fountain of Wisdom." (Ecclus i. 5.) So man, in order to have wisdom and perfection, must conform to the eternal Word of God, and learn his doctrine as the scholar does that of his master.

Again, as the artist produces his work according to his conception and knowledge, so God created beings conformably to his eternal Wisdom, which is his Son the prototype of all things. Now, when a work of art is deteriorated by time or accident, it is restored by the skilful hand of the artist to its original state. So, in like manner, the degradation of the human race was repaired by the Incarnation of the eternal Word of God.

Q. 7. Why did the Son of God assume human nature in preference to every other kind of nature ? Because it is intellectual and more capable of receiving the divine Word by knowledge and love, and also because it was in the greatest need of a supernatural remedy on account of original sin. Holy Scripture says likewise: "My delight is to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii. 31.)

The angelic nature, being more perfect than ours, enjoys the presence of the Divinity. Hence the angels who remained faithful did not need a Saviour. The rebel angels are forever excluded from the kingdom of heaven and irrevocably fixed in evil. Hence it is human nature alone that needed redemption and salvation by the Incarnation of the adorable Son of God.

Q. 8. Was it suitable that the Son of God took human nature in one of the descendants of Adam ?

Human nature was transmitted from Adam as its source to all his posterity ; but it was corrupted in its source by the malice of satan. It was therefore necessary that the same nature which transgressed the law of God, should do long penance in order to satisfy divine justice ; and it conquered by the power and mercy of the Son of God, its old enemy. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, so Jesus also made himself partaker of the same ; wherefore it behoves him in all things to be made like unto his brethren that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest before God, and be a propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb. II. 14, 17.)

The Word was united to the body by means of the soul. Means implies medium or middle term between the beginning and end ; and there is always a certain order between the beginning and end of everything ; but it is necessary to distinguish between the order of time and

that of nature. The order of time is that in which the mystery of the Incarnation was effected by the simultaneous union of the body and soul of the Son of God.

As to the order of nature, there is an intermediate agency between God and a created being; and as the soul is a spiritual substance superior to the body, so God in his infinite power, wisdom, mercy and glory, pre-ordained from all eternity that the Word was to be united to the body by means of the soul. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we have seen the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John, i. 14.)

Q. 9. Was there habitual grace in the soul of Jesus Christ?

Habitual grace is a participation of divine nature. Jesus Christ partook thereof, for he was God by his divine essence.

The human soul is naturally disposed to receive grace. Hence the soul of Jesus Christ, being united with God, the source of all graces, contained the fulness of all graces.

Moreover, as he was the mediator between God and man, it was necessary that an inexhaustible power of grace should be in him, in order to communicate grace to all the human race whom he came to reconcile with his eternal Father.

"Of his fulness we all have received; for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 16, 17.)

Q. 10. Had the soul of Jesus Christ all virtues?

Grace descends on the very essence of the soul and from this spiritual essence proceed all virtues, grace, therefore, is the principal source of every virtue.

Now, an effect generally participates of the nature and excellence of its principle. Hence all grace and perfection had their source in the Son of God. The soul of Jesus

Christ, therefore, who as the Son of God has the fulness of grace and perfection, was replenished with all virtues without exception.

Had Jesus Christ as man faith and hope? St. Paul says: "Faith is the evidence of invisible things; but Jesus Christ, from the very moment of his Incarnation, saw God in all his glory, and therefore did not want faith. However he had the merit of this virtue whose principal character is to obey God in all things, and "He was obedient even unto the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.)

Hope is an ardent desire to possess what one does not enjoy. But Jesus Christ enjoyed the presence of the Divinity at the moment he was conceived, and therefore he did not need hope unless that of the immortality and glory of his body, and of the bodies of all the elect of God after the general resurrection. Hence faith and hope were not necessary for him after having assumed human nature.

Q. 11. Did the soul of Jesus Christ enjoy the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are the spiritual perfection of the powers of the soul according as they are moved and inspired by the operation of the Holy Ghost. It is evident that the soul of Jesus Christ was moved by these divine inspirations in the most perfect manner. "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan and was led by the same Holy Spirit into the desert. (Luke iv. 1.) Hence St. Gregory says that the Humanity of Jesus Christ was always accompanied by the Holy Ghost who proceeded from his Divinity.

Q. 12. Had Jesus Christ as man the gift of prophecy?

A prophet is he who knows and announces future events, or things naturally inaccessible to the senses and common understanding of man — things whose time and

place are altogether unknown to us. He who foretells and announces an extraordinary event that now takes place or is to take place in any part of the world, has the gift of prophecy; for, his knowledge of future things could come only from supernatural revelation. Now, Jesus Christ foretold many things of this kind, especially in reference to his resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem, the propagation of the Gospel, the persecution of the Church, and the frightful events that are to take place at the consummation of the world. Therefore Jesus Christ as God and man possessed the gift of prophecy in a much higher degree of perfection than any of the prophets.

Q. 13. Had Jesus Christ as man the fulness of grace?

By the hypostatical union of the eternal Word to human nature Jesus Christ had all graces, gifts and perfections from the divine source, and from him they flow into our souls. "We have seen the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth." (Luke i. 14.)

Q. 14. Was grace infinite in Jesus Christ as man?

The grace of union contained in the eternal Word was immeasurable and unlimited; but it is not the same in habitual grace; for this grace, being received in the soul of Jesus Christ as in its subject, had certain limits as to his humanity. If then the grace of Jesus Christ was infinite, how did it happen that, as he advanced in age, he also increased in grace and wisdom with God and men? (Luke ii. 52.)

These words of the Gospel signify that, in proportion as Jesus Christ advanced in age, the more grace and wisdom and perfection he manifested to the world.

The angel Gabriel, when saluting the Blessed Virgin Mary on the subject of the Incarnation, said, "She was full of grace." (Luke i. 28.) We read in the Acts of the

Apostles that St. Stephen was full of grace and fortitude. (Acts vi. 8.) These graces are relative as to their pre-eminent degree of sanctity as well as that of all the other saints of God, and had only a participation of divine grace ; but Jesus Christ is, as God and man, the source of all graces. Therefore the grace of Christ is infinite as to the operations and effects.

Q. 15. Is Jesus Christ the head of the Church ?

“God has subjected all things to him, and made him head over all the Church, which is his body.” (Eph. i. 22, 23.) Of all the parts of the body, the head is the principal organ. Hence the beginning of a thing is called the head. As the human nature of Christ is hypostatically united to the Divinity, Jesus Christ possesses the fulness of grace, and communicates it to all the members of his mystic body. Hence St. Paul says: “Present your members as instruments of justice unto God.” (Rom. vi. 13.) The same apostle also says: “He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall also vivify your mortal bodies on account of the Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom viii. 11.)

Q. 16. Is Jesus Christ head of all men, even of infidels ?

There is a difference between the mystic body of the Church and the human body. The members of the human body exist all at the same time, but those of the Church have a perpetual succession in all ages. Some are united to Christ by glory, others by charity, more by faith, and finally, others are so only by their possible conversion to the true faith. Though infidels are not actually in the Church, they have the power and possibility of embracing her doctrine by free-will and principally by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, which alone are sufficient for the salvation of all mankind.

Such are the divers ways of spiritual union with Jesus Christ, by which all men are more or less connected with his mystic body. Hence St. Paul says: "He is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful." (I. Tim. iv. 10.) "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." (I. John, ii. 2.)

Q. 17. Is Christ the Head of the Angels?

A multitude that has the same end in view is called a body of men. Thus we say a body of the army, the body of the nation. The only end of men and angels who make but one universal body in heaven, is eternal glory, and it is Jesus Christ who gives them glory. "For in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally; and he is the head of all principality and power." (Cor. ii. 9, 10.) We also read in the Gospel of St. Matthew (iv. 11.): "And behold angels came and ministered to him." Therefore, as angels and men are destined to enjoy eternal beatitude, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is justly called the head of angels and men.

Q. 18. Had Jesus Christ divine and human knowledge at the same time?

It might seem that human knowledge was useless, as divine knowledge comprises all light, grace and perfection.

The soul of man at first has no clear idea of things; it is like an empty table, or canvas spread before the eyes of the painter, capable of receiving various colors by the intellectual faculty. What is in a state of possibility is less perfect than that which is in real act. But how can it be supposed that there was anything imperfect in Jesus Christ who united the Divinity to the humanity, and endowed us with the grace of perfection?

The knowledge of the first principles is natural to the soul of man. So Jesus Christ when assuming our nature

had both divine and intellectual knowledge; for he is the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. His divine knowledge, therefore, gave additional splendor and perfection to his natural and intellectual knowledge, as the air receives light, heat and lustre from the sun.

Jesus Christ, in his state of humanity, had every kind of knowledge, divine, intellectual, infused and acquired. Human nature was united to the eternal Word, which is the light and glory of God; but being distinct from divine nature, it could see the Word only in created light.

The angels see in the light of glory all that is essential to their eternal happiness, and Jesus Christ saw in that light the past, present and future, for all things in heaven and on earth proceed from him.

Infused knowledge put all his powers into action, and two agents — the one natural, the other supernatural, can produce this effect. Therefore Jesus Christ had infused knowledge of what man naturally learns and of what he knows by supernatural revelation.

As he had by infusion all the knowledge of which the passive intellect is capable, he acquired by time and experience all that is within the sphere of the active intellect; he proceeded, as we do, by way of deductions to more general knowledge. So the human nature of Christ, in virtue of its union with the divine Word was led to the highest degree of knowledge and perfection, always enlightened by the brilliant rays of celestial light. Hence St. Paul says that "Jesus Christ possesses all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 3.)

Q. 19. Had his soul the plenitude of the divine Essence?

A being is confined to the limits of its specific form, which is its only sphere of power and action. Hence, as

the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ remained distinct in their union, his soul had only a created form and a limited power. Therefore his soul, as being created, had not divine omnipotence.

Q. 20. Had his soul unlimited power with regard to his own body?

St. Paul says that "Jesus Christ was made like unto his brethren in all things." (Heb. ii. 17.) But human nature is such that, whatever is essentially necessary for it, as health, food, and physical development, depends not on our will or reason, but on him who is the author of nature and all things. Hence Christ's soul could no more deviate from the natural organization of his body than it could with regard to strange bodies. As instrument of the divine Word it had absolute power over his body; but the action appertaining to the principal agent, is attributable to the eternal Word rather than to the soul of Jesus Christ. However, it never attempted anything which was above its natural power and capacity, or inconsistent with its profound wisdom and natural faculty. If it desired the resurrection of the body and all the miracles performed by the Saviour, it was to conform to the will and glory of the Almighty, and was, therefore, only an instrument of divine power and wisdom. St. Augustine says, it is impossible that the will of the Saviour could not be accomplished, for he never wished but what he knew could not but happen.

Consequences of the union of the divine and the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ.

In speaking of Jesus Christ we can say: God is man, and man is God, and several expressions of the same kind. To understand the signification of those and similar

expressions, it is necessary to know what is called the communications of idioms, or the proper terms applicable to the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ. It is a figure of speech in virtue of which are reciprocally attributed to one of the two natures of Christ the terms and appropriations suitable to the other.

Their union was hypostatical, as that of the body and soul. As soul and body form but one man, so the Word—the Son of God — made flesh form but one Christ. Hence it is that we can give to Jesus Christ the attributes of God and those of man, and say: Jesus Christ is God, Jesus Christ is man.

This reciprocal application to both natures must be made with sound judgment and discernment. To avoid all error in this important matter, it is necessary to observe these two essential rules: (1) Never use expressions which may be contrary to the unity of person in Jesus Christ, or to the distinction of both natures. To say, for instance, God was man, the Divinity became humanity would not be orthodox.

(2) Never attribute the properties of one nature to the other without reference to the divine Person. The two natures are united only by the eternal Word, and every proposition affirming their union without agreeing with the notion of the Word, would be contrary to the doctrine of the Church; for instance, to say: God was born, he died, etc. We should say: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born, suffered death on the cross, etc.

Things appertaining to the unity of Jesus Christ as to his person, will and operation.

As there were in Jesus Christ two natures and only one Person, it is clear that what regarded nature was mani-

fold, and what related to Person was simple: for being appertains to individuality, and nature cannot act but in relation to this being. It is humanity, which is purely simple, but distinguishes the personality of a man; but we perceive a multiplicity of things in our nature.

I can speak, walk, learn, read; I can be such or such in trade, business, or profession, and have two hands, two feet, etc.; and these natural qualities and abilities are united in the simple form of my existence and person; so that, if born blind, God can grant me in the course of my life the use of my sight, which is a part of my nature. I do not thereby acquire a new being; it subsists already in my individual person.

In like manner the Person of Jesus Christ subsisted in the union of the Divinity and Humanity, and formed thereby but one and the same being.

Now, though there was but one only being in Jesus Christ, it would be wrong to conclude that he could have but one will and one operation, which are the inherent principles of a being.

The Eutychians erroneously asserted that the human nature of Jesus Christ was totally absorbed in the divine nature, from which the Monothelites concluded that Jesus Christ had but one will and operation.

But the Gospel, on the contrary, tells us in several pages that the will and operation of Jesus Christ as man were distinct from those of the Divinity. He sat down wearied and fatigued, wept over the tomb of Lazarus, and shed bitter tears in the Garden of Olives. "My soul," said he, "is sorrowful even unto death. O Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me; but yet not my will, but thine be done." (Luke xxii. 42.) Hence, as the Son of God assumed human nature, and retrenched nothing thereby

from his divine nature, it must necessarily have had distinct operations, the one human, the other divine. To deny, then, the distinction of his will and operation, is rank heresy, like that of Nestorius or of Eutyches, who gave a false interpretation of the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ.

Q. 21. Were the operations of Jesus Christ meritorious for himself and others?

It is more satisfactory for a man to possess a thing himself than to be indebted for it to the liberality of others; but when he has a thing he merits, it is supposed to be his own. Therefore, the merits we attribute to Jesus Christ are conformable to the dignity and glory of his divine Person, and were the same as we can acquire if there is no anterior defect on our part.

As to grace, knowledge and beatitude, he did not enjoy them by merit; for one cannot merit but what he necessarily wants, and it must be admitted that Jesus Christ had all the perfections of which human nature is capable. But with all that he also merited the glory of his resurrection, of his ascension, and to be the sovereign Judge of all mankind at the end of the world.

As divine head of the Church, he also acquired infinite treasures of merit, grace and glory for all good Christians, who are faithful members of it; for they participate of the eternal glory and unspeakable merits of the Divinity and Humanity of the Son of God, who came from heaven for the redemption and salvation of all mankind. "You are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; for all you who have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ." (Gal. iii. 26, 27.)

Q. 22. Was it necessary for Christ to pray?

Jesus Christ as God, did not need to pray for himself,

for as God he could accomplish all he desired. But Jesus Christ as man had a human will and human wants which always require the assistance of God. Hence the Gospel tells us that he went to pray on the mountain and passed whole days and nights in prayer. He prayed for himself in two ways—from a natural will in asking his heavenly Father to remove the bitter chalice from him; and he prayed by a deliberate will in asking of his Father the glory of his resurrection. He did so to give us an example of piety, humility and gratitude to our merciful Father in heaven for all the gifts and blessings which he bountifully confers on us, and beseech him incessantly to grant us grace in this life and eternal glory in the next. Hence St. Augustine says: The Lord could pray in silence and meditation if he wished to do so; but he wished to pray to his heavenly Father in public, in order to remind us that he was our mediator and teacher. “And Jesus, lifting up his eyes, said: Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. I know, thou hearest me always; but I have said this on account of the people who stand about, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John xi. 41, 42,

Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

The priest fulfils the office of mediator between men and God. He imparts holy things to men; the word sacerdos, priest, comes from sacra dans (giving holy things); he prays for the people and offers the adorable sacrifice of the Mass for their reconciliation with God. Hence St. Paul says: “Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for them, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices to God for their sins.” (Heb. v. 1.)

Such was the divine mission and holy office of Jesus Christ; for St. Peter says: “By whom God hath given us

the greatest and most precious promises, that by them you may be made partakers of divine nature." (II. Epist. i. 4.)

It is also by Jesus Christ that the whole world was to be reconciled to God. "Christ is the head of the Church," says St. Paul, "and in all things holds the primacy, because it has well pleased the Father that all plenitude should dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself." (Col. i. 18.)

Q. 23. Was Jesus Christ both priest and victim?

Jesus Christ, by his Incarnation, was not only priest, but also the victim of an expiatory, pacificatory, and propitiatory sacrifice for the redemption and salvation of mankind.

He was the victim of an expiatory sacrifice and as such he effaced our sins. "He was delivered up for our sins." (Rom. iv. 25.)

He was also the victim of a pacificatory sacrifice, and as such he offered himself to his heavenly Father to merit for us grace and perfection with the gift of perseverance in good works. "He became to all that obey him, the cause of eternal salvation." (Heb. v. 9.)

Finally, Jesus Christ was also the victim of a propitiatory sacrifice, whose object is to be perfectly united to God by grace in this life and obtain eternal glory in the next. "We have confidence to enter into the sanctuary of heaven by the blood of Christ." (Heb. x. 19.)

What is the duration of Christ's priesthood?

Jesus Christ as priest and victim is forever present in the priesthood of the new law, and continues in the holy sacrifice of the Mass the oblation of the victim whose blood he once shed on the cross. "The Lord hath sworn and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever." (Ps. 109, 4.)

"Jesus Christ, as he continueth forever, hath an ever-

lasting priesthood, whereby he is also able to save forever those that come to God by him." (Heb. vii. 24, 25.) So, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is everlasting, and the oblation of his adorable sacrifice is universal and perpetual; for the priests of his Church offer up in holy Mass the divine Victim of the cross at all hours in the different parts of the world to the end of time.

Q. 24. Can Jesus Christ as man be called the adoptive Son of God?

Adoption is only an imitation of the natural right of inheritance. Jesus Christ being the Son of God had not only in image or imitation, but in reality, the divine filiation and inheritance; and as the Person of the Son of God terminated human nature, it follows that he cannot be called the adoptive Son of God.

Q. 25. Was it suitable to the power and glory of God to have adoptive children?

To adopt one is to entitle him to a part or the whole of our inheritance; and in order to do so, we must be rich and generous. If we have nothing to give or if we are not generous no one would wish to become our adoptive child.

But God is full of eternal riches and inexhaustible bounty. It is therefore in his power to adopt us by giving us possession of an everlasting inheritance. "Who hath predestined us to be children of adoption through Jesus Christ." (Eph. i. 5.)

Q. 26. Is it, then the Father alone who adopts us?

Though adoption is the special attribute of the eternal Father, yet it takes place by the mutual co-operation of the holy Trinity; for there is unity of nature, power, and external operation of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost. "God sent his Son that we might receive the adoption of sons, and sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,

crying—Abba, Father.” (Gal. viii. 4.) “For what things soever the Father doth, these the Son also doth in like manner.” (John v. 19.)

Q. 27. Ought we to adore Jesus Christ equally in his divinity and humanity, and offer him in both natures the supreme worship of adoration?

There are two distinct things to be considered in the respect and honor we testify to a man in high power and dignity—his person and the reason why we honor him. When we bow to him, or kiss his hand in sign of friendship and respect, or when we admire and applaud his virtue, knowledge, merit, or pay due attention to his orders: in all these things it is his person we respect and revere. In like manner we honor and adore the divine Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the union of his Divinity with humanity; for he is the principle of all virtues and eternal wisdom, and consequently deserves, the divine honor of adoration. “For which cause God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.) The wise men from the East, conducted by the Holy Ghost, adored him in Bethlehem. (Matt. ii. 11.) The apostles went to the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and seeing him they adored him.” (Matt. xxviii. 6.)

Jesus Christ our Mediator.

“God our Saviour wishes all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth: for there is one mediator of God and man, the man Jesus.” (I. Tim. ii. 4, 5.)

The office of a mediator is to reconcile two opposite

parties, for the middle point is the centre of extremes. Original sin had thrown us to the remotest extremity from God, and to approach and be united with him again, we needed a powerful mediator, who by his divinity and humanity was capable to grant us pardon and grace and reconcile us with our omnipotent and merciful Creator.

Jesus Christ most bountifully accomplished the divine mediation; for he descended from heaven among us with his divine nature, presented himself to God with our mortal nature and thus offered himself up a propitiatory victim of reconciliation. "Christ died for all, that they who now live may not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." (II. Cor. v. 15.) So Jesus Christ as God and man has obtained grace and mercy for us in this life, and immortality in the next by the glorious triumph of his resurrection.

Birth of Jesus Christ.

Q. 28. Has the birth of Jesus Christ reference to his divine Person, or to his two natures?

If we consider the birth of a being in the subject that comes to life, it relates to the person, for every human being is born to subsist in a person. In this consideration Jesus Christ had but one birth; but the term of birth is nature, the specific form of the being who is born. Jesus Christ, by his divine and human nature had two kinds of birth, the one eternal by his Divinity, the other temporal by his Humanity.

Q. 29. Why did Christ wish to be born in Bethlehem?

"He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. i. 3.), to whom God had made that solemn promise; and to prove that it was fulfilled, the Saviour came into the world in the town that knew the promise and which was king David's birth-place.

The word Bethlehem means house of bread, and it is there that was to be born he who is the bread of life for all the faithful. "For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." (John vi. 33.)

Circumcision of our Lord.

The Circumcision in the Old Law was a painful and humiliating ceremony prescribed to the Israelites as a sign of their alliance with God, and of their faith in the future Messiah. It was the distinguishing mark of the children of Abraham, and obliged them to observe the law of Moses, just as Baptism, of which it was the figure, obliges Christians to observe the law of Jesus Christ.

Q. 30. Now,—Why was Christ circumcised, as he did not stand in need of effacing original sin?

He was circumcised, 1. to prove that his precious blood which was caused to flow in the delicate operation of circumcision, testified to the reality of his flesh and confounded certain heretics who, at a later period, denied it.

2. By his circumcision he showed that he was of the seed of Abraham on whom God had imposed the law of circumcision.

3. Had he not submitted to the law of circumcision, the Jews would have rejected his doctrine as that of an uncircumcised.

4. By submitting to the law of circumcision Christ gave us an example of obedience; he taught us to respect the just laws imposed upon us by higher authority.

5. Jesus Christ came to destroy sin. He assumed our own human nature. By submitting to the law of circumcision he also taught us the necessity of doing penance and of practising mortification.

6. He took on himself the whole burden of the law in order to deliver all from it who were subject to it.

7. He submitted to the law of circumcision, not for himself, but for our sanctification, and to teach us that a spiritual circumcision, that is, detachment from all earthly things, renders us worthy of contemplating the Divinity.

On the day of Circumcision, the Son of God made man received the name of *Jesus*.

Q. 31. Why was he called Jesus?

The name of a person is often an allusion to a fact which regards him in a special manner. Thus, for instance, the child who is born on the festival day of a saint, often receives the name of that saint, or is called after his Father, or some of his relatives. The friends and relatives of St. John the Baptist did not wish to give him the name John, for, said they, no one of the family is called so.

A certain name is sometimes given to a person on account of some remarkable event. Thus, Joseph of Egypt, when he saw his first-born child, was so full of joy that he called him Manasses, which means forgetfulness, because the excess of his joy made him forget all his trouble and labor. (Gen. xli. 51.)

Sometimes a person receives a name that indicates a certain quality which distinguishes him from others, as, for instance, the name of Esau, which signifies red and hairy.

But when God gives a particular name to a person, such a name denotes a special, supernatural privilege. Hence the Lord said. "Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram, but thou shalt be called Abraham, because I have made thee a Father of many nations." (Gen. xvii. 5.)

Our divine Saviour said to St. Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. xvi. 18.)

Could Christ receive any name more suitable than the august, adorable name of Jesus, which means Saviour? Hence the archangel said, not only to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also to St. Joseph, who was to be his foster-father: "The child shall be called Jesus." This holy name comprises the names "Emmanuel," "Admirable," "East," and all the other names given to him in Holy Scripture.

Epiphany, or Christ's Manifestation.

Christ's birth was not to be made manifest to all for three great reasons.

First, this manifestation would have prevented the redemption of the human race, which was accomplished by the cross, for St. Paul says: "If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." (I. Cor. ii. 8.)

Secondly, because it would have lessened the merit of faith by which Jesus Christ came to justify men. "The justice of God is produced by faith in Jesus Christ." (Rom. iii. 22.) So that if it had been known to all, the essence of faith would have been destroyed.

Thirdly, because it would excite doubt in the reality of his humanity. "Verily, thou art a hidden God, O God of Israel, our only Saviour." (Isai. xlv. 15.)

In all the circumstances of his life Jesus Christ sufficiently manifested himself to all sincere, well disposed hearts. He did not wish to constrain the mind and will by supernatural power, and only infused, as it were, a mixture of shade and light which enhance the merit of faith. Had he not veiled the splendor of his glory and divinity, it would be more difficult to believe that he became man. Had he not passed from infancy to youth and taken food and rest like all men, would not his immense power obstruct the work of mercy?

If in his infinite wisdom he did not wish to manifest his birth to all, to what kind of persons did he reveal his light and glory? He came for the salvation of all, without exception of class, sex, or nation. Hence St. Paul says: "In Jesus Christ there is neither Gentile, nor Jew, nor slave, nor free-man, for he is all and in all." (Col. iii. 11.) He was, therefore, to manifest himself to people of every nation and condition. The shepherds were Jews, and the Wisemen of the East were Gentiles. But they were all united with the foundation stone of the spiritual edifice.

The shepherds were ignorant men; they were of a humble position in life whilst the Wisemen were very learned and of a very noble extraction.

Christ also manifested himself to the just in the person of Simeon and Anna, and to sinners and infidels in the person of the Wisemen. Simeon and the prophetess Anna represented likewise both men and women, who were all distinctly to share in the immense benefit of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Now, Christ manifested himself in the following order of time.

On the day of his birth, the Jews, in the person of the shepherds came to Bethlehem to adore the Infant Jesus in his humble cradle; for it was right and just that they should have the first fruit of his worship in consideration of being the chosen people of God.

On the thirtieth day the representatives of the Gentiles appeared with their characteristically magnificent gifts to adore the Infant King and Saviour. Had they come at a later period, they would not have found him at Bethlehem, for after accomplishing the legal ceremonies, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary returned with the Infant Jesus to Nazareth, a town of Galilee.

The poor humble shepherds represented the apostles and the first of the Jews who became Christians: "Amongst whom there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many noble." (I. Cor. i. 26.)

On the fortieth day Christ was presented in the temple of Jerusalem to show that he called all the Jews represented by a few just among them.

Q. 32. What was the star that conducted the wisemen of the East?

This star, says St. Augustine, was not one of those stars which God fixed in the firmament at the universal creation, for it conducted the wise men even during the daytime; it appeared and disappeared according to circumstances, so that, when arriving in Jerusalem, they completely lost sight of it. It appeared again when they had left Herod's palace; its movement was not continual; it stopped at times, and then accompanied them as did the pillar of clouds before the Israelites in the desert; and finally it stood over the place where the Infant Jesus was. (Matt. ii. 9.) Therefore it is more than probable that it was not one of the stars of the firmament.

Some interpreters think that it was the Holy Ghost under the form of a star; and others suppose that it was the angel who, after having announced to the shepherds the good tidings of great joy, went also to proclaim it to the inspired Wisemen of the East.

It is, however, more probable that it was a new star which God miraculously created in the air close to the earth and directed by his almighty power and infallible will. It was just and conformable to divine power and wisdom that an extraordinary star should manifest to the whole universe the Son of a virgin mother, who was predestined to be the Queen of heaven.

Q. 33. Was it proper that St. John the Baptist should baptize before Jesus Christ?

That ceremony of baptism offered to St. John the Baptist an opportunity to announce Jesus Christ to the people who came to witness and receive it. He thus accustomed the Jews to the baptism of our divine Saviour, and prepared them by penance to receive this holy sacrament. Jesus Christ, on the occasion of his baptism, blessed the water, and thus made preliminary preparation for the sacrament which he was to institute in his Church.

Q. 34. Was the baptism of St. John from God, and was it a real sacrament?

St. John's baptism was from God by inspiration as a preparatory means for the baptism instituted by Christ; but any man, without special mission, could do what St. John the Baptist did in the desert.

When John saw Jesus coming to him, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world. It is to manifest him in Israel that I am come baptizing with water." (John i. 29, 31.) Therefore John's baptism was not a sacrament, but a certain ceremony preparatory to the baptism of the New Law. "He who sent me to baptize with water, said: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, is he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (John xxxiii.) Hence it was that St. Paul ordered those who had received only the baptism of St. John to receive the sacramental baptism of Jesus Christ in the Holy Ghost. (Acts, xix. 4.)

This evidently proves that John's baptism was not a sacrament; and Jesus Christ clearly confirms this when he says: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 5.)

Q. 35. As Christ was without sin original as well as actual, why did he wish to be baptized?

In receiving the baptism of water, Christ sanctified by his divine power the element which was to be the matter of the sacrament of baptism.

He also wished to give us to understand by his baptism that we must be cleansed from many stains and defilements of sin, and that we are not sufficiently pure to enter heaven without being first purified by the waters of spiritual regeneration. Again, he gave us an example of what we should always do. John said to Jesus: "I ought to be baptized by thee." And Jesus answered: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." (Matt. iii. 14. 15.)

Three remarkable circumstances accompanied the baptism of our divine Saviour, namely: Heaven was opened; the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and the celestial voice of God the Father was heard.

First, heaven was opened. His baptism was the introduction to, and the consecration of, our baptism. So, by being baptized he wished to show us the pre-eminent excellence, power and efficacy of this holy sacrament which is accomplished in the name of the three adorable persons of the Holy Trinity.

The sacrament of baptism is the beginning and foundation of faith, which makes heaven accessible to human nature.

But, by the effect of original sin heaven was shut against us, and it is only the sacrament of baptism that opens its gates for us. "Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." This entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem was prefigured by the river Jordan which the Hebrews crossed to enter into the land of promise—the emblem of heaven.

After being baptized Jesus Christ began to pray to show us that after the reception of the holy sacrament of baptism we still stand in need of the assistance and protection of God.

There is within us the source of many passions which lead us to sin. We have, moreover, to overcome the temptations of the devil and the world. To conquer these enemies of our salvation we must necessarily pray in imitation of Jesus Christ.

Heaven was opened to show us the power and glory of God, who seemed to say: I will give you heaven for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only eternal Son. "A voice came from heaven, saying: Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke iii. 22.)

The Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove.

The dove is the emblem of simplicity. "Be simple as doves," says our Lord in the Gospel. (Matt. x. 16.) The dove which appeared at our Saviour's baptism, indicated the sentiments of heart, with which the sacrament of baptism should be received by those who have come to the use of reason, that is, with simplicity and candor of soul.

The simple, natural habits of the dove represent the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost which are communicated to the soul in baptism. The dove's pleasure is to flutter about the banks of rivers. When it perceives a bird of prey in the air, it at once escapes the danger by hiding itself. This is the image of wisdom. The soul that has been sanctified by baptism, ought to take great pleasure in the study of Holy Scripture which is an immense river of wisdom flowing from the ocean of eternal Wisdom.

The dove carefully chooses pure grain as its food and rejects every kind of unwholesome food. This represents

the gift of knowledge, which avoids and disdains doctrines and expressions dangerous to faith and salvation.

The dove generously shares its food with other young little birds. This represents the gift of counsel which, by word and example enlightens sinners, who imitate the works of Satan as young animals do the voracity of their parents.

The dove is quite innocent and harmless; its bill and talons never destroy anything. This signifies the gift of understanding which never militates against the articles of faith, as heretics generally do.

The dove has no malice nor envy. This quality of the dove signifies the gift of piety which is full of the love of God and man, and always mild and amiable to everybody.

The dove builds its nest in the hollow of rocks. This habit of the dove signifies the gift of fortitude which acts with prudence and moderation in all things and places all hopes and refuge in the everlasting rock of the Church, the pillar and foundation of truth.

The dove has a kind of mournful tone of voice rather than warbling notes. This signifies the gift of fear which makes the soul weep over its past faults.

The principal effect of baptism is the perfect reconciliation of God with man. The dove is also the model of reconciliation and concord; for when the deluge accomplished the reconciliation of heaven with the earth, the innocent dove proclaimed it in returning with an olive branch as a signal of victory and triumph for the rest of mankind.

Baptism produces another wonderful effect; it incorporates all men into one only Church, one universal community of spiritual brethren who have, as it were, but one heart and one soul for their eternal Father. Hence

St. Paul says: "Christ loved the Church and delivered himself up for her that he might sanctify her, cleansing her by the power of water in the word of life, that he might present her to himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25.) The Holy Ghost in describing the unity of the Church, says: "My dove is but one perfect one." (Cor. vi. 8.) Thus the dove is also a visible image of union, peace and harmony; for these simple, innocent birds always form but one compact body without disunion or discord.

A voice from heaven was heard coming from our merciful, eternal Father. The baptism of Jesus Christ was the marvellous prototype of our spiritual regeneration which we receive in the adorable name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Hence the three divine persons of the most Holy Trinity were present at that baptism, and appeared in all their splendor, power and glory. The Son is baptised; the Holy Ghost descends on him, and the Father proclaims that he is his only beloved Son.

Christ's Presentation in the Temple.

Q. 36. Why was the holy Infant Jesus presented in the Temple?

Jesus Christ enjoyed the beatific vision of God. He was always in God's presence. Why, then, did he wish to be presented in the temple?

The old law imposed two precepts relative to newborn infants. The first precept expressly commanded that two sacrifices should be offered up for every male or female child. The one expiatory to redeem the child from the sin in which it was conceived; the other was a holocaust, by which the infant was to be offered to God for the first time, in order thereby to testify that it belonged to the Sovereign Lord and Master of all things.

The second precept concerned the first-born infants, for at their birth they exclusively became God's property. Hence God ordained that the first-born children of the Israelites should be ransomed by an offering in commemoration of their captivity from which they were delivered by the death of the first-born of Egypt. Jesus Christ, being born of an Israelite mother, and "the first-born amongst many brethren in God," (Rom. viii. 29.) had therefore to conform to these two precepts. "After the days of her purification, they brought the Infant Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord; as it is written in the law, that every male child shall be consecrated to him." They also accomplished the precept which related to all children," that is, "to offer a sacrifice according to the law of the Lord." (Luke ii. 22.) He accomplished the law in order to deliver from its obligations those who were subject to this law. He was also presented to God, in order to teach us often to make an offering of ourselves to his heavenly Father.

It was the offering of the poor, that was made for the Infant Jesus at his presentation in the temple. The offering of the rich was a lamb, and a pigeon. The offering of the poor consisted of two young pigeons. Such was the humble offering made by the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph for him who is rich in eternal power and glory, and made himself poor in order to enrich and sanctify us by the merits of his poverty.

On this feast, which is at the same time the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, candles are blessed, signifying 1) that Jesus Christ is the true light of the world by his doctrine and example. 2) The lighted candles represent also the lively faith and ardent charity with which we ought to attach ourselves to God in union with Jesus Christ.

The blessed candles are carried in procession in honor of the journey of the Blessed Virgin when she carried her Son to Jerusalem.

The Annunciation of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary.

Q. 37. Was it necessary that the mystery of the Incarnation should be announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

There are several reasons why it was necessary and proper that the Incarnation should be announced to her.

By this announcement she conceived the Son of God sooner in her mind than in her body, and was happier, says St. Augustine, by the first than by the second conception.

She was also more certain of that divine operation by knowing it in a supernatural way and from an archangel. She offered to God the sacrifice which is the most acceptable to him — that of an humble and perfect obedience to his holy will. “And Mary said: behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.” (Luke i. 38.)

The annunciation presents to us a certain kind of espousal between the Son of God and human nature, which holy Mary then represented in all the human race, and hence the angel required free consent, which is the essential part of every marriage. As Eve was the first cause of our spiritual ruin, so Mary was the first of all her posterity to co-operate with the Son of God for our redemption and salvation. As she had perfect knowledge of the Scripture from her earliest youth, she had full conviction of the reality of the Incarnation; but in her profound humility she could not imagine that God would have deigned to choose her in preference to all others, and that it was by her conception that the great mystery was to be accomp-

lished. Hence she wanted absolute certainty thereof from God himself.

How was the mystery of the Incarnation to be announced to her?

The Son of God, being invisible to the eyes of the body, was to appear in a visible form. As the Blessed Virgin was to receive him in her mind and body, her eyes and spirit wanted to be first of all convinced thereof. A vision purely intellectual is undoubtedly superior to the natural sight of the body; but the state of the present life does not permit the enjoyment of the former. Our eyes are the surest and best testimony of visible things, and therefore it was necessary that the mystery of the Incarnation should have been announced by a spiritual substance in human form, in order to attract the sight and convince it by incontestible evidence. The angel said to Mary: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." At this announcement she was troubled, and the angel said to her again: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God." (Luke i. 28.) Such is the great difference between the apparitions of the angels of heaven and the wicked spirits of darkness; these never give any assurance of joy or glory, but always cause trouble, perplexity, and confusion wherever they appear. Still the trouble which holy Mary felt arose from the timidity of a virgin; for she trembled, not at the presence of the archangel Gabriel, but was astonished and sensibly struck at the great mystery which he announced to her.

Q. 38. What mode did the angel adopt to announce to her this mystery?

It was necessary to attract all her attention to apprise her of the will of God and obtain her free consent thereto. Hence he saluted her in these amiable words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace." This extraordinary expression sur-

prised her and vividly excited her whole attention; for there is nothing more astonishing for an humble, holy person than the recital of her praises. Then the angel said: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, bring forth a son and call his name Jesus."

And how was the mystery of the Incarnation to be accomplished? The angel still said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come over thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke i. 31.) To put an end to all hesitation, and convince her of the fact he represented to her the state of her cousin Elizabeth, to whom God granted a special privilege to conceive at a very advanced age. The Blessed Virgin being finally convinced by this divine communication did no longer refuse to consent and said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." At that very moment was accomplished in her virginal womb the mystery of the Incarnation.

Conception of the Saviour,

The substance of the body of Jesus Christ was conceived and formed in a flesh, the issue of Adam. The Incarnation, according to the divine Wisdom, was to heal human nature of the leprosy of sin with which it was originally infected. Our nature required an efficacious remedy because it was spiritually wounded and corrupted by the transgression of Adam; and to apply the remedy to our evils it was necessary that Jesus Christ should have taken a body from the substance that came from Adam. If St. Paul calls Jesus Christ the second Adam, a celestial man, he does so, not on account of the nature of his body, but on account of the power and operation of the Holy Ghost who formed it. So the body of Jesus Christ was formed of the substance of Adam, not by the natural course

of human generation, but was conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was of the flesh of Adam.

Was it necessary that he should be born of a woman?

Jesus Christ came to save both sexes; and as that of man is more noble he assumed the form of man. He was born of a woman to show that she is not excluded from the benefit of redemption. Thus he manifested the deliverance of both sexes. He also manifested thereby the reality of his Incarnation; for had he appeared all on a sudden in the midst of mankind, his presence would have caused greater astonishment. There might be also serious doubts entertained as to the reality of his body, and his power in appearing with more splendor might not have produced the same salutary effect.

Q. 39. Was his body, then, formed of the substance of holy Mary?

In the generation of the sacred body of Jesus Christ there was something natural and supernatural. It is natural that he might be born of a woman and of the purest blood. It is above the general order of nature that he should be born of a virgin. The woman who conceives is but the passive principle. She furnishes the natural substance to which the active principle of man communicates fecundity. Such is the natural course of human generation; but that of the adorable body of Jesus Christ was supernaturally formed in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

The active principle in the generation of Christ's body was the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come into thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." The Holy Trinity formed the Saviour's body; for it was a miraculous work and the three divine persons

equally contributed towards the accomplishment of it. However, it is more especially attributed to the Holy Ghost; for he is the eternal Love of the Father and of the Son; and the love of God is so immense as to send his adorable Son to assume human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hence the Gospel says: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) The Incarnation has made us children of God, and sanctified us, which is also the work of the Holy Ghost. "And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, which makes you call God your Father." (Gal. iv. 6.)

Can the Holy Ghost then be said to be the Father of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ either as God or man cannot be supposed to be the Son of the Holy Ghost; for as God he is of the same divine essence as the Holy Ghost without being begotten by him; and as man he is not consubstantial with the Holy Ghost. Hence it is more correct to say that Christ's body was conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and not conceived of the Holy Ghost. St. Augustine says that the Blessed Virgin Mary was the material and instrumental cause of the Incarnation and the Holy Ghost was the efficient and supernatural cause of it.

Successive order of Christ's Conception.

Christ was perfectly formed at the first moment of his conception. In the natural order of conception we must consider, first, the local circulation of the blood towards the place destined for generation; secondly, the mixture of the elements which compose its substance, and thirdly, its progressive development.

As to the first and third part of this operation, the

formation of Christ's body was instantaneous; for every movement and increase of body imply succession, and where there is succession, no simultaneous action can be possible. But the mixture of elements in which principally consists the effect of conception was not successive; for the power of the active principle being infinite, instantaneously formed all Christ's body. Hence St. Gregory says that immediately after the Annunciation of the angel and the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Word was made flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Jesus Christ had also a rational soul at the very instant he was conceived. It has already been explained that the soul was the principal medium by which the divine Word assumed a human body.

Though Christ's conception, says St. Ambrose, was natural as to human nature, it was miraculous and supernatural as to God who accomplished it.

Perfection of the Infant Jesus after his conception.

Several effects proceed from these principles. Jesus Christ, from the very first instance of his formation was full of divine grace which sanctified his body and soul. He had at the moment even the use of his free-will; for the humanity of Christ had all the perfection which human nature is capable of; and therefore, as soon as he was formed in his mother's womb, he had the full operation of the soul, which is accomplished in a single moment, and is the effect of free-will. The two faculties which constitute it, the intellect and will, act as quick as lightning. Admitting then, that Jesus Christ had all the perfections of which human nature is capable, it must be granted at the same time that he had the full use of free-will at the moment of his existence. He had also in that state the power and

faculty of merit which is attached to every good work produced by a free-will that tends to comply with the will of God, under the divine inspiration of perfect charity.

In fine, he had full enjoyment of the beatific vision at the very moment of his conception. As he had the plenitude of all graces and perfections he was in constant contemplation of the Divinity, and beheld it in greater splendor and glory than even all the angels of heaven. So Jesus Christ as man had more grace and perfection in his state of humanity than all the human race, and as God he was equal to him in power, wisdom, and glory, and consequently was by far superior to all the celestial hierarchy.

Mode of life adopted by Jesus Christ.

It might seem that it would have been more suitable to our divine Saviour to have lived in solitude than in the midst of society; for solitude is favorable to contemplative life, which is the most perfect kind of life. But our Saviour thought it better to conform his manner of living to the object of his Incarnation.

The prophet Baruch says: "Afterwards he was seen upon earth, and conversed with men." (iii. 38.) St. John likewise says: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." He mercifully assumed human nature in order to teach truth and justice to all men. "For this I was born and came into the world to give testimony to the truth." (John xviii. 37.) So, in order to accomplish our redemption and preach his holy doctrine to the world, he lived in public society. "To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God: it is for that I am sent." (Luke iv. 13.)

He came to heal moral evils and lead back the strayed sheep to the fold. As a charitable physician he went to console and cure the sick on their bed of grief and suffer-

ing; and as a good shepherd, he went in search of the wandering sheep, and thus gave to all the pastors of his church a good example of zeal and charity for the salvation of their flock.

He came into this world in order to reconcile all men to God. Hence it was first of all necessary to excite their hope and confidence by familiar conversations and striking proofs of justice and charity. "And it came to pass, as he was at table in that house, many publicans and sinners came in and sat down with Jesus and his disciples." (Matt. ix. 10.) How, then, could he convert sinners from their evil ways and teach them his holy doctrine unless by living amidst them? Hence St. Ambrose says that he teaches us by his example to embrace his precepts.

Q. 40. Was it fit that he should lead a life of the greatest austerity?

We should always conform to the usages of those with whom we live. St. Paul says: "I became all to all that I might save all." (Cor. ix. 22.) Christ, therefore, living among the Jews, thought it proper to use the same kind of food and dress, and comply with their mode of life, in order to gain their esteem, and induce them to embrace his doctrine by his condescension and the sweetness of his conversation. If his life had been very austere, his enemies always jealous and suspicious, would have accused him of eccentricity and hypocrisy. Hence, comparing him to John the Baptist who used no kind of delicacies of meat or drink in common use with the Jews, they accused him of gluttony and intemperance.

It is evident, however, that he led a very poor, frugal, laborious life. (Matt. viii. 20.); he had not the means, except by miracle to pay the tax imposed by the law. (Matt. xvii.)

That extreme poverty which obliged him to have recourse to others for the common necessaries of life, far from being prejudicial to his divine mission, soon powerfully promoted its progress and success. He instructed the people by word and example and imparted to all the immense benefit of enlightened knowledge of salvation.

So he led a poor life to set an example of poverty and zeal, and disinterestedness to the ministers of the Gospel. It is on this account that he said to the apostles: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses." (Matt. x. 9.) As he subjected himself to the death of the body to give us a spiritual life, so he resigned himself to temporal poverty to obtain for us spiritual riches. Hence St. Paul says: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor on your account in order that through his poverty you might be rich." (II. Cor. viii. 9.) Had he possessed great wealth, his enemies would have reproached him for it and attributed to a spirit of avarice his zeal for the propagation of his doctrine. But his poverty and humble state of life were a manifestation of his divine power which did not need human means to insure the success of his glorious work. He who led captivity captive and communicated truth, light and grace to the whole world, chose a poor mother, a poor, contemptible nation, and was born in a stable, enveloped in poor swaddling clothes, whose cradle was the manger of two animals. What spectacle, what example for the Christian world!

Q. 41. Why did Christ allow himself to be tempted by the devil?

As Jesus Christ came to suffer death on the cross in order to rise again from the dead and to give us sufficient strength to conquer death, so, in like manner, he allowed himself to be tempted in order to furnish us with spiritual

arms by which we could efficaciously conquer our eternal enemy. He, therefore, was not tempted by any exterior necessity, but by his own free will he allowed himself to be tempted like a valiant hero who willingly presents himself in the field of battle to encounter his enemy in defence of his country.

By allowing himself to be tempted he showed that no one, however great may be his progress in virtue, is sufficiently secure from danger, and therefore every one must always be on his guard in order not to fall from the highest stage of virtue. "Son, when thou consenteth to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." (Eccles. ii. 1.)

Knowing that our Lord himself was tempted we more confidently implore his protection, because he himself passed through all the afflictions and tribulations of this life. Hence St. Paul says: "We have a High Priest who can have compassion on our infirmities. He was without sin, but was tempted in all things as we are." (Heb. iv. 15.)

It may be asked, how could Satan dare tempt him? Satan, most certainly, had some doubts as to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He very well knew that the Son of God was to come for the salvation of the world; but seeing our Saviour subject to all the infirmities of human life, he had some difficulty to believe that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, though he witnessed his miracles and prodigies. It is evident that he was uncertain of the fact that Jesus Christ was really the Son of God; for he said to him: "If thou be the Son of God," etc., (St. Luke, iv.)

Q. 42. Does the Gospel relate the three temptations of Jesus in the manner they happened?

The devil tempts us only by suggestion or persuasion. He proposes to us what he thinks is apt to seduce us.

Hence he suggests to us such ideas as are conformable to our taste and inclination.

To a man of piety and virtue he does not propose those horrible vices common to corrupted people; he proposes to him things that do not appear very contrary to virtue or perfection.

When Satan tempted Eve, he first excited her curiosity to taste the delicious fruit in the Garden of Paradise. Then he inflamed her vanity and vain-glory, saying: Your eyes shall be opened to see more light. At last he set her envy and pride into full action, saying: you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. In the temptation of Jesus Christ we see the same order, craft, and artifice. As Jesus Christ was hungry and exhausted after a forty days' fast, Satan proposed to him something to eat. Then, by flattery asked him to manifest his power. At last he promised him all the kingdoms of the world, with all the power, glory and riches thereof. On this occasion he did not say, "if thou art the Son of God," but if thou wilt, then adore me, and all these things shall be thine. His chief design, therefore, was to seduce him into idolatry. Thus, pride, idolatry, superstition, and heresy with all their evil consequences, are satan's principal instruments for the seduction and perdition of men.

Jesus Christ confounded the malice and artifice of Satan by the testimony of Holy Scripture alone, without the interposition of divine power, in order to punish and mortify him the more, and conquer by the mere power of his humanity, that is, as man, the eternal enemy of the human race.

Q. 43. Why did Christ preach his doctrine only to the Jews?

Jesus Christ himself tells us: "I was not sent but to

the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." (Matt. xv. 24.) By communicating his doctrine at first only to the Jews, our divine Saviour faithfully accomplished the promises made to their fore-fathers. Hence St. Paul says: "Jesus Christ was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Rom. xv. 8.) These words imply that Jesus Christ was preacher and apostle to the Jews in order to prove the infallibility of the promise and word of God.

There is no power but from God and all powers depend on him. Hence it was ordained by divine Providence that the Jews should have the first fruits of Christ's doctrine; for of all nations they were the nearest to God by their faith in the Messiah and the uniformity of their worship. It was, therefore, from Judea that the light of Christianity was to appear and shine on the Gentiles, as in the celestial hierarchy the illuminations of the Divinity are infused by the angels of the highest order on those of the lowest. "I will send of them that shall be saved to the Gentiles and the most remote islands; to them that have not heard of me, and have not seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory to the Gentiles." (Isai. lxvi. 19.)

If Christ had preached his doctrine to the Gentiles and Samaritans, the Jews would have taken this fact as a pretext to reject his ministry; but, as he kept in the limits of Judea, he left them no excuse for their obstinacy and incredulity. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified: Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat die when thrown into the ground, it remaineth alone; but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 23.) St. Augustine says that the grain remaining alone signifies the infidelity of the Jews, and that its bringing forth much fruit signifies the propagation of the faith

among all nations. It was by his death and the glorious victory of the Cross that Jesus Christ obtained universal power over all nations. Before his passion he refused to go to pagan countries, saying that he was not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel; but after his resurrection the hour was come to preach the Gospel, and hence he said to his apostles: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.)

Q. 44. Should he have preached to the Jews without offending them?

The salvation of the people is preferable to the caprice and bigotry of individuals. If their perversity and fanaticism is huffed at what the true minister of God preaches, he must not be daunted and troubled on that account, for the word of God is free in spite of tongue and sword. If the truth scandalizes the wicked, says St. Gregory, it is better to suffer their scandal than to discontinue the doctrine of grace and truth. Who were those who took offence at our Saviour's doctrine? A small number of fanatic Scribes and Pharisees, full of hypocrisy and wickedness, who, through malice and jealousy, opposed the divine doctrine which alone could save and sanctify the people. "Let them alone," said our divine Saviour, "they are blind, and if the blind leads the blind they shall both fall into the pit." (Matt. xv. 14.)

Q. 45. Why has Christ not left his doctrine in writing?

The best professor ought to have the most judicious method of teaching, and the method most impressive and suitable to a great master is, not to write his doctrine in books, but to teach it publicly and inculcate it on the minds and hearts of his disciples. Hence Pythagoras and Sokra-

tes, who were the most renowned teachers among the heathen, never wished to write their philosophical doctrine.

But Jesus Christ, who has all power in heaven and on earth, well knew what would best suit his disciples and all Christian generations. Hence it is said in the Gospel: "And it came to pass that when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine; for he was teaching them as one having power."

It might also have been supposed that, if he had written his doctrine, it contained only what was in the letter; but St. John says: "I think the world would not be able to contain the books that should be written on all that he (Christ) has said and done." (xxi. 25.) It is, therefore, better that the doctrine of Jesus Christ which is the spiritual law of life, was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart. (II. Cor. iii. 3.)

Q. 46. Did Jesus Christ wish to work miracles?

As Christ had to prove to the world that God was in him, not, indeed, by the grace of adoption, but by hypostatic union, and that his doctrine was divine, so it was necessary for him to perform miracles.

God is absolute master of nature, and can therefore suspend its laws at will. Hence miracles are, as it were, the seal which he stamps on a doctrine to prove that it comes from him. As there can be no doubt that a letter stamped with the seal of a king, comes from the king, so, in like manner, there can be no doubt that a doctrine confirmed by miracles comes from God. It was therefore necessary for Jesus Christ to work miracles in order to prove his divine mission. Hence, when the fury of the Jews became more violent, Jesus Christ referred them to those miracles as incontestable arguments. "If you do not

believe me," said he to the Jews, "believe my works, that you may know and believe thereby that the Father is in me and I in the Father." (John x. 38.)

(See Gift of miracles in volume "Greatest Commandments," p. 605.)

Q. 47. At what period of his life did he begin to perform miracles?

At the beginning of his public life, because it was at that time that he began to instruct the people, and, therefore, at that time his miracles were necessary to confirm his doctrine. Christ's first miracle was that of changing water into wine at the marriage of Cana. Had he manifested the power and glory of his Divinity at an earlier period of his life, the proof and evidence of his humanity would be less certain. Hence it was necessary that, before he performed miracles, his human nature should have acquired its regular and full development which is about the age of thirty years.

Q. 48. Did Christ's miracles sufficiently prove his Divinity?

"The works," says he, "which the Father has given me to accomplish, give testimony of him that hath sent me." (John v. 36.) So his works evidently proved his Divinity, otherwise he would not have referred his enemies to them to be convinced that he was God. (See volume "Greatest Comm." p. 615.)

Q. 49. When did the transfiguration of Jesus Christ take place?

The transfiguration of Christ took place a short time before his Passion. But why did he wish to manifest the splendor of his transfiguration in the presence of a few of his disciples? The glory of heaven was the principal object of his sufferings, and it is also the principal object of our sufferings. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these

things, and so enter his glory?" (Luke xxxv. 26.) It was therefore necessary that Jesus Christ, before his Passion, should inspire his apostles with courage and fortitude by showing them that sufferings and afflictions lead both head and members to eternal glory. Hence St. Paul says: "It is through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

His transfiguration was also the prototype of ours. "He will transform the lowness of our body into the resemblance of the glory of his body." (Phil. iii. 21.) There is, however, a difference between our body when gloriously risen and that of Jesus Christ at his transfiguration; for the light of our soul will naturally shine on our body; but on the day of his transfiguration our divine Saviour let the splendid rays of his Divinity sparkle on his soul, and cover miraculously his glorious body. "He was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow." (Matt. xvii. 2.)

Q. 50. Why did he choose Moses and Elias, Peter, James and John as witnesses of his transformation?

Christ wished to manifest his transfiguration to the world, in order to inspire all men with an ardent desire for eternal glory, which shall be the reward of their faith, charity and temporal afflictions, but it is by the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ alone that we can expect it. When on the eve of his Passion he made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, those who went before him and following, with loud acclamations, exclaiming "Hosannah etc." (salvation and redemption), showed on that occasion that all men in past and future ages must expect salvation and glory from him. Hence it was necessary that Jesus Christ should have as representative witnesses of his transfiguration men of the Old and New Testament. Moses and

Elias represented those of the Old Law, and Peter, James and John those of the New Law.

Q. 51. Why was the voice of God the Father heard at Christ's transfiguration?

The adoption of the children of God is an image of the eternal filiation of his Son Jesus Christ, and grace delineates in us the first features of that image. It will be perfect only in glory when he will be visible to us and we shall see him face to face. We receive the first fruits of grace by baptism, and the voice of the eternal Father was heard at the baptism of our Saviour, which was the model and foundation of ours. So it was also necessary that that glorious voice should be heard at the time of his transfiguration. It manifested to us Christ's glory and that which shall crown the merits and tribulations of a Christian life. "Behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice out of the cloud said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.)

Q. 52. Was the death of Jesus Christ necessary for the redemption of the human race?

1. A thing is necessary when it cannot otherwise exist, for instance, the whole must necessarily be greater than its part.

2. A thing is necessary when the negation of its existence implies contradiction; for instance, God must necessarily be eternal. The passion of Christ, however, was not necessary in this sense, neither on the part of God, nor on the part of man. God has from eternity all that is necessary for him, and the Passion is not eternal. Neither was the Passion necessary on the part of man, for he could have been redeemed otherwise than by the Passion and death of Jesus Christ.

3. There is another kind of necessity — that of con-

straint which arises from an external principle; for instance, if you are chained to a block, you must necessarily remain there. Such like necessity did not compel Jesus Christ to suffer death. "He was offered because it was his own will." (Isai liii. 7.) Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels." (Matt. xxvi. 53.)

4. In fine, there is a necessity which has its cause of existence in the end proposed to be attained. It is this kind of necessity which made Jesus Christ suffer death. His Passion was necessary in view to the end which Jesus Christ proposed to himself. "So must the Son of man be lifted up, that, whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have life everlasting." (John iii. 14, 15.)

The Passion was necessary, so that Jesus Christ might merit the glorious exaltation which succeeded it. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

The Passion was also necessary for the fulfilment of the word and promise of God who had revealed it to the ancient Patriarchs and prophets. And he said to them: "These are the words which I spoke to you, that all things must necessarily be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me." (Luke xxiv. 44.)

Christ's Passion was even a work of justice, for it satisfied divine justice by the reconciliation of the human race with God the Father. The atonement made for the sins of fallen man by the Passion and death of Christ was even super-abundant, for he shed all his blood on the cross, whilst one single drop of it would have been sufficient for the redemption of all mankind.

Christ's Passion was likewise a work of mercy, for

man would never have been able of himself to satisfy for the sins of all mankind. Hence God, in his infinite mercy, took compassion on man's deplorable state. To remedy that universal evil, God delivered up his ever adorable Son who bore the heavy burden of our fallen nature and paid with his precious blood the dear price of our redemption. "For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." So we see that the mercy of God in thus redeeming us by the Passion and death of his Son Jesus Christ was much greater than if he had gratuitously pardoned us. "God who is rich in mercy hath so loved us by his exceedingly great charity, that even when we were dead in sins, he gave us life through Jesus Christ by whose grace we are saved." (Eph. ii. 4, 5.)

Justice absolutely requires reparation to be in proportion to the offence or injury; but the offence committed by man against God, could be adequately repaired only by the Passion of Christ which is of infinite merit. Therefore it was necessary as to human redemption, that Christ should suffer death. St. Luke (i. 27.) says that nothing is impossible to God. The Lord of heaven and earth, therefore, could have found in his infinite power and wisdom, other means to redeem mankind. He could have easily pardoned us gratuitously, as a creditor who can say to his debtor: Go off now, I cancel your whole debt, and you owe me nothing any more. Had God acted thus he would not have violated the rights of justice. A judge, it is true, cannot acquit a culprit who has transgressed the law of the land. It is his duty to vindicate the rights of the public. Besides, he is subject to a superior power which commands him to punish the guilty; but God has no superior, and as

it is he who was offended by the transgression of men he could pardon them on any terms or conditions that he thought proper. But if God pre-ordained that Christ should suffer for the redemption of mankind, his Passion and death were inevitable, otherwise there would be no redemption or salvation for mankind.

Q. 53. Was it more suitable for Christ to redeem us by his Passion than by a single act of his will?

A mode of acting is by so much more useful as it comprises means to attain the end. Thus, for instance, nature employs several means to fulfil one and the same function, in order to obtain its effects with greater certainty; it gives us two eyes, in order to secure the sight and see things better.

In like manner, our Saviour's Passion has procured our salvation in a more noble and efficacious way than if it had been procured by a simple act of his divine will. In fact, besides our justification, we find many powerful means of salvation in his holy Passion. His sufferings have manifested to us the boundless charity of God for mankind. Hence St. Paul says: "God commendeth his charity towards us because, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

In his Passion Jesus Christ has given us a perfect model of obedience, humility, perseverance, in a word, of all the virtues conducive to life eternal. "Because Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps." (I. Peter ii. 21.)

Besides our deliverance from sin, Christ's Passion has also procured for us grace in this world and glory in the next.

We are thereby also constrained in justice and conscience to refrain from sin knowing that we have been

ransomed at a great price. "You are bought," says St. Paul, "with a great price; glorify and bear God in your body." (I. Cor. vi. 20.)

Finally, Christ's holy Passion has imparted more dignity and excellence to man, who was tempted and seduced into sin and iniquity, by the evil spirit of all artifice and malice and became thus subject to death and eternal damnation; but by the Passion and death of the Son of God we conquer death and the dangerous enemy of our salvation. "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I. Cor. xv. 57.)

Q. 54. Why did Jesus Christ wish to suffer death on the cross?

Of all punishments and deaths that of the cross is the most ignominious. Hence all men have the greatest horror of it. The Roman law never permitted any one but slaves to be crucified; it exempted all free citizens from that terrible mode of capital punishment.

Jesus Christ wished to die on the cross to show us that nothing should make us leave the right way to God, and that we ought to be ready to undergo the most frightful kind of death rather than to abandon our holy religion.

Adam sinned by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree. So Jesus Christ wished to repair that criminal disobedience by being nailed to the wood of the cross.

By being suspended in the air, he sanctified that element as he did the earth in walking upon it and sprinkling it with his divine blood.

The arms of the cross were turned to the four cardinal points of the earth to show that our Saviour wished to redeem all nations and that his adorable blood flowing from the cross would sanctify the four great divisions of the universe.

The four branches of the cross signified also the divine Omnipotence and Providence which extend to the universal creation.

Jesus Christ dying on the cross, spread out his arms to show that he imparted with equal abundance his spiritual benefits to the people of the Old and New Law. He thereby showed also the true way to heaven, telling us to raise the eyes of our soul and body to contemplate him on the throne of his mercy and glory. In fine, the cross lifted up in the air signifies our passage from this earth to the other world when we shall traverse the vast space which separates us from the kingdom of glory. Hence our Lord says; "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself." (John xii. 32.) And St. Paul says: "Christ, who knew no sin made himself sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in him." (II. Cor. v. 21.)

Q. 55. What sufferings did Christ endure on the cross?

Christ suffered on the cross all the pains and sorrows incident to man except the infirmities and diseases which are the consequences of particular sins. The Saviour of the world was persecuted by a multitude of enemies of every class and condition — the Jews, Gentiles, high priests, doctors of the law, rich and poor, high and low, all conspired against him with malice, treachery and enmity. Hence the words of the royal prophet were accomplished in Christ: "Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord, and against his Christ." (Ps. ii. 1, 2.)

Christ suffered from his most intimate friends who abandoned him in his first danger, and from two of his apostles in particular — Judas betrayed him, and Peter denied him.

He suffered in his reputation from the most horrible calumnies and infamous blasphemies of his cruel enemies.

He suffered in his honor and glory from constant insult, derision and mockery; and in the only property he had — his garments, for which they cast lots at the foot of the cross.

Besides the torments of mind and body, he suffered most of all in his soul which was overwhelmed with grief, sadness and disquietude.

He suffered frightful tortures in every part of his body.

His sacred head was all covered with bloody wounds, caused by the crown of thorns. His hands and feet were pierced all through with blunt nails. His enemies spat in his face, buffeted and beat him from head to foot, etc., and finally, to increase his tortures, they tore off his garments from his body all covered with gore and wounds.

All his senses suffered in succession from a most violent shock — the touch from flagellation and crucifixion, the taste from vinegar and gall; the smell from putrifying carcasses in Calvary; the hearing from the barbarous vociferations and blasphemies of the rabble, and the sight from the mournful spectacle in beholding his Virgin Mother and dearly beloved disciple at the foot of the cross.

Q. 56. Did our Saviour feel these torments as keenly as any other man does?

External pain proceeds from the wounds of the body or the fracture of the limbs, and internal pain, commonly called grief or sorrow, is caused by the sensation of mental affliction. Jesus Christ felt his torments of body and soul more keenly than any other man feels his tortures; for the external torture of Jesus Christ extended over his whole body which was harrowed with bloody wounds from head to foot. Besides, there is no capital punishment more

painful and ignominious than that of crucifixion. The executioner transpierces with iron nails the hands and feet, which are the most nervous and sensitive parts of the body. The weight of the body increases every moment more and more the torments of the crucified, and a sudden death does not put an end to them, as is the case with those who are hanged or beheaded.

As to his internal torture, it is indescribable and incomprehensible; for he emptied the chalice of grief and sorrow to the very lees. Our divine Saviour had taken on himself the frightful burden of all past and future sins of the human race. Hence St. Paul says; "Christ has loved us and delivered himself up for us an oblation and sacrifice to God as an odor of sweetness." (Eph. v. 2.)

He also witnessed with intense grief the abandonment of some of his disciples, and bore with incomparable humility and obedience the agony and death of the cross, the very thought of which is enough to make the whole world tremble. In fact, if the means are to be compared with the vital importance of the object, what must not have been the incalculable sufferings which were to satisfy and atone for the iniquities of all the human race? Hence the prophet Isaias, when describing the torments and sorrows of our Saviour, says: "Surely, he has borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins." (liii. 4, 5.)

Q. 57. Why was Christ crucified between two thieves?

By allowing himself to be crucified between two thieves, our divine Saviour showed us that he had taken upon himself the iniquities of the world, and that he was, as it were, guilty, being covered with dishonor and ignominy, and that his death was to take place amongst the wicked. "He was despised and the most abject of men; he was reputed with

the wicked, and prayed for the transgressors." (Isaias, liii. 3, 12.)

By his death on the cross between two criminals he also gives us clearly to understand that on the day of judgment he will separate the good from the wicked. Hence St. Augustine says: The cross was a tribunal; for Jesus Christ as judge was in the midst of two culprits, the one at his right repented and believed in the power and divinity of the Son of God, and thus was saved; and the other at his left expired in a state of incredulity and impenitence, and was consequently deprived of eternal glory.

The Jews thought they could tarnish the splendor and glory of Christ's life and expected that, by dying on the cross, he would be stigmatized forever in the eyes of the world, like all criminals; but, says St. John Chrysostom, ever since he shed his adorable blood on the cross, it became a universal emblem of joy, honor, hope and victory to all the faithful. It shone brilliantly in the diadem and coat-of-arms of many kings and emperors; it glitters as the sun all over the universe; it is an object of veneration for all good Christians; it is their most glorious ornament and the spiritual consolation to the poor and afflicted.

Q. 58. Is the efficient cause of Christ's Passion attributable to his enemies or to himself?

Christ's enemies were the direct cause of Christ's Passion; for it was their intention to put him to death and therefore it produced the desired effect; but Christ himself was the indirect cause of his Passion. As he was hypostatically united to the Divinity, he could have easily prevented his enemies from making him suffer death.

Moreover, as his soul had divine power to protect his body from danger and death, he could have saved his life without the least difficulty. Hence he is said to have sacrificed his life by a voluntary death.

“No man taketh away my life from me, but I lay it down myself and I have power to take it up again.” (John x. 18.)

Q. 59. Had Christ to suffer death through obedience?

As sin and death entered into the world by the disobedience of one man, it was necessary that grace and justification should come by the obedience of the Saviour of the world. “He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. ii. 8.) The reconciliation of God with mankind was to be accomplished by the most excellent and acceptable sacrifice; but there is no sacrifice whose odor is more agreeable to God than perfect obedience or voluntary sacrifice.

“For we have been reconciled with God by the death of his Son.” (Rom. v. 10.) So the sacrifice of Christ’s Passion and death was the fruit of his obedience and the triumph of his victory over death and the enemy of our salvation.

By his Passion, Christ accomplished all the precepts of the ancient law: He accomplished the moral precepts which consist in charity, by suffering for the love of God and all mankind.

“That the world may know I love the Father, and that I fulfil his commandment, arise, let us go hence,” (that is, to suffer death. (John xiv. 31.) St. Paul says: “I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me.” (Gal. ii. 20.)

By his Passion Christ also accomplished the ceremonial precepts; for the sacrifices prescribed by them were but figurative of the sacrifice of his Passion and represented it as the shadow does the body.

By his Passion Christ accomplished the judicial precepts whose principal object was a reparation for injuries

or offences. By his Passion and death Christ made ample reparation for our transgressions. By being nailed to the wood of the cross, he atoned for the disobedience of Adam and Eve who transgressed the divine precept in eating of the forbidden fruit. So, at the last moment of his agony he exclaimed: "All is consummated."

Therefore the great sacrifice of the cross is the salutary divine fruit of universal charity, deep humility, and perfect obedience.

Q. 60. Did God the Father deliver Christ up to the death of the cross?

Yes; for it was pre-ordained from all eternity that Christ should suffer for the redemption of the human race. Hence the prophet Isaias says: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (liii. 6.) He delivered him up to that ignominious death and inspired him with charity to sacrifice his life for the salvation of the world.

In fine, he left him in the hands of his cruel enemies in such a state of abandonment that he exclaimed in a most sorrowful voice: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." (Matt. xxvii. 46.). But Jesus Christ had freely consented to his Passion and death, for his will was always in harmony with that of his Father. Hence we see, on one hand, the rigorous justice of God the Father who did not wish to let the transgression of man pass with impunity, whereas he did not spare even his own Son. (Rom. viii. 32.) We see also his great mercy in giving us a victim of propitiation by the Passion and death of his only begotten Son.

Q. 61. Did Christ's enemies know who he was?

A distinction must be made between the different classes of the Jewish people: The highest class, as princes, high-priests and doctors of the law who were all well versed in Holy Scripture knew that a Messiah or Redeemer

was to come. They had some doubt as to whether Christ was the Redeemer; but hatred, jealousy and inveterate animosity darkened their mind and hardened their hearts against the light, truth and grace which were offered them. Notwithstanding all his miracles they formed only certain conjectures, the same as the evil spirits, so that they did not know whether Christ was God or an ordinary man. Their ignorance, however, was inexcusable and reprehensible, because his divine doctrine and works evidently proved that he was the promised Redeemer. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." (John xv. 22.)

The common people in general did not know that Christ was the promised Redeemer, or the Son of God. Some of them, however, were converted, but the multitude remained incredulous. "And now, brethren, I know that you have done it (crucified Christ) through ignorance." (Acts, iii. 17.) His miracles were a cause of admiration and astonishment to them, and the greater part of the people would undoubtedly have acknowledged Christ's Divinity, had they not been prevented by those in higher authority.

As to the Gentiles who condemned him and the soldiers who crucified him, not having any knowledge of the law and the prophets, they were much less culpable than all the others who took an active part in Christ's passion and death.

Q. 62. In what manner did Christ's Passion effect our salvation?

Christ obtained grace and salvation for us, 1) by the merit of his Passion; for by his death on the cross he merited our justification not only as a divine person, but also as head of the Church and consequently communicated

the merits acquired by his Passion to the members of the mystic Body; even from the beginning of his conception Christ merited eternal salvation for us; but there were obstacles which prevented the effects of those merits; and to remove and remedy them with full efficiency, it was necessary that he should die for our eternal glory.

2) Christ's Passion effected our salvation by way of satisfaction and atonement for our sins. The passion and death of Jesus Christ, his obedience and humility, the infinite charity which he manifested for the glory of God and the salvation of all mankind amply and even superabundantly satisfied for the sins of the whole world. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world." (I. John ii. 11.) See volume "Apostles' Creed" p. 302 to 304.)

3) Christ's Passion effected our salvation by way of sacrifice, for he offered himself up as a pacificatory victim to God the Father. On the cross he was a universal holocaust, and the immolation of his life was complete for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of the world.

4) Christ's Passion effected our salvation by way of redemption in delivering us from the slavery of sin and death. Sin subjected us to two kinds of slavery — to a slavery of the enemy of our salvation who, in Adam, seduced and kept in bondage the whole human race; and to a slavery of the divine justice which subjected us to the punishment of sin. Jesus Christ by redeeming us from sin and death, destroyed the first cause of our captivity and broke the chains which bound us in the cruel slavery of Satan. He put an end to the slavery of the divine justice by offering his sufferings as a substitution for ours, and by giving for our redemption, not gold or silver, but himself in person. "You were not redeemed with corruptible

things as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ." (I. Peter, i. 18, 19.) Now, though Jesus Christ suffered the death of the cross for all mankind, yet only the faithful who are united to him by faith and charity can enjoy the divine fruits of the redemption which he has so mercifully accomplished. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. iii. 24, 25.)

Q. 63. What are the effects of Christ's Passion?

Christ's Passion is the fulness of divine love; it shows us in a most sensible manner the immense love which God has for us; it excites reciprocal sentiments of love on our part, and kindles in our hearts the fire of divine love, which obtains for us the forgiveness of our sins. "Wherefore I say to thee: many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." (Luke, vii. 47.)

The Divinity made use of Christ's body as the most powerful instrument to extirpate sin, destroy its empire and restore to us the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Sins, it is true, are still committed after Christ's Passion; but his Passion has delivered us from them in as much as it affords us sufficient means to cancel them.

If a great physician had discovered an infallible remedy to heal all the bodily infirmities and diseases of men now and hereafter, would he not be justly said to have the power of curing all mankind?

The Sacraments of baptism and penance, it is true, are necessary for the remission of our sins; but all sacraments derive their efficacy from the Passion of Jesus Christ; they are the application of the means which he has given us to efface our sins.

Q. 64. Have we been delivered from the power of the devil by the Passion of Christ?

Sin subjected us to the slavery of the devil; but as Christ destroyed sin by his Passion, slavery, the consequence of sin, no longer exists. Christ's Passion has emancipated us from the tyranny and slavery of our implacable enemy by reconciling us with God and granting us everlasting liberty.

Satan went beyond his power in conspiring against the Son of God and fomenting the death of the just.

But Jesus Christ has deprived him of his pernicious power and delivered from his bondage those who were his slaves. Satan, however, has still power to tempt us to sin, to torment our bodies in various ways, and drag us to eternal perdition. But, in Christ's Passion we have powerful arms to destroy satan's power and escape his wily snares, if we as faithful Christians, make a proper use of these arms in the work of our salvation.

Q. 65. Has Christ's Passion delivered us from the punishment of sin?

All those who wilfully commit mortal sin expose their souls to eternal damnation; and out of hell there is no redemption, for the wages of sin is everlasting death. Christ's Passion, therefore, produces its effects only in those to whom it is applied by faith, charity, and the sacraments. We have already seen that the satisfaction or atonement which Christ by his death offered to God the Father was more than sufficient to repair the transgressions of mankind and pay the debt of sin. But the Passion of our Saviour is only a remedy, which must be applied in order to produce the desired effect. Hence it is useless for the damned, because they can never avail themselves of its salutary and divine influence.

But those who are in the way of salvation must use that powerful remedy by conforming their life to that of Christ crucified.

Baptism, as administered in the Catholic Church is a perfect image of it, for no penance is imposed on those who receive this holy sacrament at any age, and is therefore, never given the second time, "because Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust." (I. Peter iii. 18.) St. Paul also says: "We are buried together with him by baptism into the death of sin." (Rom. vi. 4.) Hence those who fall into sin again after the reception of baptism, cannot resemble Christ nor participate in the merits of Christ's Passion unless they do full penance for their sins. The penance, however, imposed on the penitent never bears proportion to the nature of the sin; but the superabundant merits of Christ's Passion supply the deficiency thereof.

We partake of the effects of the holy Passion as members of Jesus Christ; and as he died on the cross, we must also die to sin, in order to rise glorious from the grave as he did after his Passion and death. "If sons, we are also heirs; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him." (Rom. viii. 17.)

Q. 66. Has Christ's Passion reconciled us with God?

Sin exposed us to the wrath and vengeance of heaven. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are equally hateful." (Wisd. xiv. 9.) "O Lord! thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." (Ps. v. 7.) Our Saviour's Passion has effaced sin, which offended God, and irritated him against us; it was a propitiatory sacrifice, whose principal effect is to appease the wrath of God, who has, for its sake, mercifully pardoned the transgressions of mankind.

Christ's Passion has also opened the gates of heaven

for us. To open the gates of heaven means to remove the obstacle which stops the passage. Now it was sin and its punishment that shut the gates of heaven against us. "This way shall be called the holy way, and nothing unclean shall pass over it." (Isai: xxxv. 8.) We were excluded from it by original sin. Hence God, after banishing Adam from the garden of Paradise, placed at its entrance an angel with a flaming sword, turning to every side to keep the way of the tree of life, to give us to understand that man was to be banished forever from heaven unless he would be assisted by a divine Mediator to overcome the obstacle which barred the passage thereto. Hence the Apostle says: "We have, therefore, hope and confidence to enter into the sanctuary of heaven by the blood of Christ."

We also needed means to efface the mortal stains of our actual sins. These sins are forgiven by the immense benefit of true faith, hope and charity, and principally of the holy sacraments which unite us to Christ crucified and cause his adorable blood to flow into our souls. "Christ being come a high-priest of the good things to come, entered once for ever; by his own blood, into the celestial sanctuary, having obtained for us eternal redemption." (Hebr. ix. 11, 12.)

Q. 67. Did Christ merit to be exalted in virtue of his Passion?

Merit implies equality of justice. The workman, for instance, merits his wages.

When one takes more than is right, his injustice merits an adequate punishment; but if you willingly give up what belongs to you, to another who has no right to it, you merit his gratitude, which consists in receiving from him in turn more than you gave him. Hence Christ says: "He that

humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xiv. 11.) But our divine Saviour humbled himself in all things during his whole life, and especially by his Passion and death, in four ways: First, in condescending to an ignominious death. Secondly, in lying in the sepulchre whilst his soul was in limbo. Thirdly, in consenting to be an object of insult and mockery to a vile and contemptible populace. Fourthly, in submitting to become a victim of the most unjust condemnation.

He merited his glorious resurrection by his voluntary death, and his triumphant ascension into heaven by his sepulture in the bosom of the earth. "He that descended is the same that ascended above all the heavens." (Eph. iv. 10.) All the insults, humiliations and persecutions which he suffered from his cruel enemies, merited for him to sit at the right hand of his heavenly Father, on the throne of eternal glory. Hence the Apostle says: "God exalted him and gave him a name which is above all names," etc. (Phil. ii. 9.)

The cruel sentence of death pronounced against him merited for him the universal power of judging on the last day both his judges and all the human race. "Thy cause hath been judged as that of the wicked: cause and judgment thou shalt recover." (Job xxxvi. 17.) Thus, in his Passion he merited the exaltation of his body by way of reward. It was just that the body which had suffered death on the cross by charity should also have its reward by eternal glorification.

Q. 68. Was it necessary that the Son of God should suffer death?

He who offers himself in place of a culprit, ought to undergo the punishment of his crime. Now, the punishment of death was pronounced against Adam and all his

posterity after he had eaten of the forbidden fruit. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." (Gen. xi. 17.) Now, as Jesus took upon himself the punishment of temporal death to deliver mankind from eternal death, it was necessary that he should die.

Moreover, by his death Christ clearly proved that he had really assumed human nature. Had he miraculously retired from the sight of men, or disappeared from this world without being seen to end his life by death, all would have believed that he was only a ghost or phantom, and was neither God nor man.

Again, by undergoing the death of the cross he taught us not to fear the horrors of death, because a glorious immortality follows death. It is, indeed, a great consolation for a good Christian at the last moment of his life to think that death will soon unite him in eternal glory to his divine Saviour. He taught us to die spiritually to sin and to live only in God and for God.

In fine, Christ's Passion and death manifested the infinite power of the Divinity by his glorious resurrection and inspired all good Christians with the hope of being redeemed thereby from sin and hell, and to be one day with their merciful Saviour in the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. Christ is the source of life as God, but not as man, so he died as man and not as God. "Now, if Christ is preached that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection." (I. Cor. xv. 12.)

Q. 69. Did Christ's death obtain for us the means of salvation?

Death may be considered as future, or as consummated. Future death is the natural and irresistible tendency of the body towards dissolution, and such was Christ's whole life

for us; it was but a continual passion for us, for he suffered and merited grace and justification for us every moment of his life.

His death, consummated on Mount Calvary, obtained for us life eternal by destroying sin and the pernicious power of hell; it obtained for us an efficacious remedy against the death of the body, by the consoling assurance of our resurrection on the day of general judgment. Hence St. Paul says: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (I. Cor. xv. 54.) "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Q. 70. Was Christ's Divinity separated from his body and soul whilst he remained in the sepulchre?

The grace of God is immutable and irrevocable unless by the effect of sin. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) The body which the Son of God had taken in his Incarnation being always in a state of perfect innocence and sanctity, was even during the three days of his death hypostatically united to the Word. It is also evident with much more reason that the soul, which is the intermediate union of the Word and the body of Christ, was not separated from the Divinity, but was from his body. Therefore the Divinity remained inseparable from his body and soul during the interval of his death and resurrection. Still, as the soul was separated from the body during the three days of his death, it cannot be said that Christ was man during that time; it would be even heresy to maintain the contrary, for it would be in contradiction to the articles of faith, as clearly expressed in the Apostles' Creed.

Q. 71. Was it fit and suitable that Christ should be buried after his crucifixion?

It was necessary that Christ should be buried in order

to ascertain his death, and so Pilate, in permitting to take down his body from the cross, ordered the soldiers to have full certainty of his death.

By his death our divine Saviour gave us infallible hope to rise one day as he did from the grave, where our mortal remains shall be deposited. "For the hour is to come when all that are in graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." (John v. 28.)

The dead silence of Christ's sepulchre represented likewise that they who are spiritually dead to sin, ought to avoid the turmoil of the world and live with God in silence and retirement. Hence the Apostle says: "You are dead to the world, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. iii. 3.)

Q. 72. Can a proper reason be given for the different circumstances attendant on his sepulture?

Christ was buried in a garden to give us to understand that his death delivered us from that death to which we were subjected by the transgression of Adam committed in the garden.

Christ was buried by strangers and in a place that did not belong to him to give us to understand that he did not die for himself, but for the salvation of the whole world.

By his death and burial he also showed us his extreme poverty and destitution. He was born in a stable, and the manger of animals was his first cradle. After a life of persecution ended by a most cruel death on the cross, he was wrapt in a borrowed winding-sheet and buried in the tomb of a stranger. His body was put in a sepulchre which was never used before, so that after his resurrection it was easily ascertained that it was his body, and not that of another which arose.

The new sepulchre likewise signified the new life of

Christians regenerated in Christ, and that which they shall find in the grave when the angel of God sounds the trumpet for the universal resurrection.

The sepulchre was cut in a huge rock and a large stone was rolled to close it up. This was done according to divine Providence, in order that the Jews could not say that the disciples of our Lord buried him somewhere and then took away his body.

The perfumes and white linen used for Christ's interment had also a mystic signification. The myrrh and aloes represented the bitterness of penance by which we preserve Jesus Christ in our souls, and our bodies from the corruption of evil passions.

The aromatic odor indicated the glory of that sepulture which the prophets had foretold, and its fame which was spread all over the world as a sweet perfume. The clean white linen signified the purity of heart and the sanctity of life necessary for all who receive the adorable body of Jesus Christ in holy Communion.

Q. 73. Why did Christ not let his body fall into a state of dissolution?

The royal prophet says: "Thou wilt not give thy holy body to see corruption." It was principally to show that his death was not to be attributed to the infirmity of human nature which is apt to fall into dissolution when life is extinct. The human body is liable to putrefaction immediately after death, because it is then deprived of the power of cohesion which keeps its divers elements regularly united.

It was not so with our Saviour's body, for he made a voluntary sacrifice of his life, and his death was caused by violence rather than by bodily infirmity. So he prevented the dissolution of his body to manifest his supreme power and Divinity. Hence St. John Chrysostom says: "The power

of great men lasts only during their life, it vanishes in the grave. Their grandeur is buried with them. Their bodies become dust, and their personal glory evaporates like smoke. It is something far different in the splendor and glory of the Son of God. Everything in him was seemingly weak and humble before his death on the cross; but after his crucifixion his power and glory shone far and near more brilliantly than the sun in its meridian splendor so that the whole world might know that it was not a mere man who was crucified.

Christ's descent into hell (limbo).

By the word "hell" the Jews designated three places: first, the place where the souls of the just waited for the coming of the Messiah; secondly, the place where the damned suffer eternal punishment; and, thirdly, purgatory, or the place where souls undergo expiatory punishment. Now, into what part of hell did Christ descend? To understand the answer to this question, let us remember that a thing can be present in a place by the effect it produces therein, or by its essence. In virtue of his Divinity Jesus Christ descended into those three different regions, but his presence produced a relative effect in those places: It convinced the damned of their incredulity and wickedness; the souls of purgatory received thereby the joyful hope of soon seeing the glorious light of heaven, and the just were covered with splendid rays of glory. Such were the marvellous effects of Christ's descent into those three regions.

He descended in his divine essence only into the confinement of the just in order to rejoice by the presence of his soul and Divinity, those whom he had already visited by his grace. His soul was but in one place at a time, and

nevertheless all the just joyfully felt the happy effect of its presence. He died on the cross on Mount Calvary, and yet the whole world experienced the spiritual effect of his passion and death. "I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be thy death; O hell! I will be thy ruin." (Osee, xiii. 14.) "By the blood of thy Testament thou hast sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit." (Zach. ix. 11.)

Q. 74. Did Christ descend with his Divinity into limbo, and how long did he remain there?

Christ descended into limbo in all his divine Essence, the same as it remained with his body in the sepulchre; for his Divinity remained always united to his body and soul. It is also more than probable that his soul remained in limbo as long as his body was in the grave.

Q. 75. Did Christ deliver the souls of the just from limbo when he descended into it?

Christ exercised great power in limbo by virtue of his Passion which delivered mankind from the powers of hell, from sin and the punishment of sin. It is evident that the just had to undergo but the punishment of original sin, which consists in the death of the body and in the exclusion from heaven. Christ could not deliver them from the death of the body, as they had already undergone it; but he put an end to the punishment of exclusion from heaven by opening the gates of limbo and those of heaven for the patriarchs, prophets, and all the just souls of the ancient law. Hence St. Paul says: "Christ hath despoiled the principalities and powers and exposed them in triumphing over them in himself." (Col. ii. 15.)

He did not deliver a single one of the damned, for they were all eternally separated from him either for want of faith or charity, or perhaps of both together, and therefore

they could not, in justice, participate in the spiritual benefits of his passion and death. He did not even deliver the children who died in original sin. To understand this, we must remember a certain principle and doctrine, namely: There is no salvation possible for any one without being united to Jesus Christ crucified. Hence the great Apostle St. Paul says: "It is Jesus Christ whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. iii. 25.) Now, those children were not united to Christ by their own faith, because they had not the use of reason which is the foundation of faith; nor were they united to Christ by the faith of their parents, because the faith of their parents was not sufficient for the salvation of their children; nor were those children united to Christ by means of a sacrament, because there was no sacrament under the Old Law, which had of itself the virtue of conferring either grace or justification.

Besides, life eternal is granted only to those who are in the state of sanctifying grace. "The grace of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.) All those, therefore, who died at any age without perfect charity and faith in the Redeemer to come, as well as those who die without the sacrament of spiritual generation after the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, are not purified from the mortal stain of original sin, and are, consequently, excluded from the kingdom of eternal glory.

Christ's Resurrection.

Q. 76. Was it necessary that Christ should have risen from the dead?

Christ's resurrection was necessary for the manifestation of the power, justice and glory of God the Father. "Ought not Christ to have suffered, and so to enter into

his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26.) Christ humbled himself even to the death of the cross in obedience to his heavenly Father and through charity for all mankind. He, therefore, merited a glorious exaltation.

Christ's resurrection was also necessary in order that it might secure a solid, everlasting foundation of our faith; for had he not risen from the dead, we might think that he died like the rest of men, and was no more than an ordinary man. Hence the Apostle says: "If Christ be not risen again, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain." (I. Cor. xv. 14.) When the royal prophet predicted the death of Christ, he said: "What profit is there in my blood if I go down to corruption? Shall dust confess to thee or declare thy truth?" (Psalm xxix. 10.)

Our Saviour's resurrection is a positive insurance of ours; for if the head is in the enjoyment of glorification, the members must also partake of it. "Now, if Christ be risen from the dead," says St. Paul, "how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead." (I. Cor. xv. 12.)

Christ's resurrection took place at sun-rise to show that it was the aurora of our future glorification. It also teaches us as Christians that being dead to sin, and risen to the life of grace, we ought henceforth lead a new life in imitation of our divine Saviour.

His resurrection, therefore, is the foundation of our faith and the pledge of our future resurrection. "I know that my redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall rise out of the earth." (Job. xix, 25.)

We must, then, in order to profess and practise our faith, firmly believe in the Divinity and Humanity of the Son of God; for the faith in the one is not sufficient for salvation without faith in the other. Hence, in his bound-

less charity, he did not delay his resurrection, which evidently manifested the splendor and glory of his Divinity.

On the other hand, had he risen immediately after his crucifixion, it might have been supposed that his death was but a swoon or lethargy and that consequently he was not really dead. He therefore remained long enough in the sepulchre to prove to all that he really died.

Q. 77. Why is Christ called the firstborn of the dead?

To rise from the dead means to break the chains of death and return to life, and this can happen in a more or less perfect manner, according as one is delivered from the captivity of death for a time only or forever.

Those whose resurrection, or rather resuscitation preceded or followed that of Jesus Christ, were still subject to mortality; their resurrection, therefore, was not perpetual; but Christ once risen from the dead died no more, as St. Paul says. Christ's resurrection, therefore, was the first perfect resurrection, and hence he was the first-born of the dead, according to these words of St. Paul: "Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that sleep in death: for by a man came death, and by a man came resurrection of the dead; and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made to live forever." (I. Cor. xv. 20.)

Q. 78. Did Christ rise from the dead by his own power or by the power of God the Father?

In virtue of his Divinity, Christ was the cause of his resurrection; but according to his humanity, his resurrection was operated by the omnipotence of God. During his temporal death, his Divinity was not separated from his body or soul; for they were hypostatically united to it. So, by his own power he could have re-united them after his death; but in consequence of his Humanity, his resurrection was principally accomplished by the will and power

of God. "For although he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." (II. Cor. xiii. 4.)

Q. 79. Had Christ a real human body after his resurrection?

When Christ appeared to his disciples they were troubled and frightened, and he said to them: "Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet. It is myself, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have." (Luke xxiv. 37.) So, his resurrection would not have been real and perfect, if his body had not been the same after his death as it was before it.

Q. 80. Was the body of Christ in a state of glorification, as ours shall be after the general resurrection?

"He will reform the body of his lowness made like to the body of his glory." (Phil. iii. 21.) "It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body." (I. Cor. xv. 44.) So, the resurrection of our Saviour is the efficient original cause of ours, and the cause is always superior to the effect, the model more perfect than the copy.

The humiliation of his body during his Passion and death merited for him his glorious exaltation. "Now, my soul is troubled," said he, alluding to the affliction of his Passion, and then he said: "Father, glorify thy name. A voice then came from heaven: I have glorified it and I will glorify it again." (John xii. 27.)

From the first moment of his Incarnation he possessed the glory of the Divinity; and if it did not visibly shine on his body, it was because it had to suffer death; but after his resurrection the same cause no longer existed, and therefore his holy body was in full glory.

Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples, eat and drank with them; but it was not according to the natural func-

tions of the vegetative and animal life he did so. Hence the venerable Bede say: As dry earth absorbs water, and the powerful heat of the sun does the same, the one from absolute want, the other by its natural power. So Jesus Christ after his resurrection eat and drank, not from any want of nutriment, but consuming the food by the power of his Divinity.

St. Augustine likewise says that our Saviour in appearing in his real form, with a spiritual body, eat and drank, not because he wanted food, but because he wanted to show that he could use and consume it at will.

Q. 81. Why did Christ retain the wounds or stigmata of his crucifixion?

If Christ retained the wounds of his crucifixion, it was not for want of power to heal them, but to manifest forever, in heaven and on earth, his glorious victory and triumph. St. Augustine says that in heaven we shall perhaps see the wounds of the martyrs which will not be a deformity, but a splendid ornament for their bodies; for from them will glitter a brilliant light to manifest their faith, fortitude, and glorious victory.

The apostles, in seeing his body all covered with bloody wounds, could not but acknowledge his power and divinity, and were thereby more confirmed in the truth of his doctrine.

St. Thomas, who was the most obstinate among them to believe the reality of his body, was at once convinced when Christ said to him: "See my hands and side, and put thy finger into them, and be not faithless, but believe; then he exclaimed in profound adoration: My Lord and my God." (John xxi. 27.)

Jesus Christ as our eternal Advocate and merciful Mediator at the right hand of his omnipotent Father, im-

plores grace and mercy for us in presenting to him the wounds he received on the cross for our redemption and salvation.

On the day of general judgment he will confound the wicked and convince them of their incredulity and iniquity, by the wonderful sight of these wounds exposed to the view of all the human race. These wounds will speak in powerful language to the reprobate, as St. Augustine says in these words: "Behold him whom you have crucified; look at these bloody wounds you have inflicted on him; contemplate that stream of blood flowing from his side which was torn open by you and for you, and in which you did not wish to take refuge against the snares of your eternal enemy. Oh! wicked race! the bloody instrument of your crimes had opened in that sacred body a passage to glory, which leads to the kingdom of heaven, and you refused to follow it." He concludes by saying: "I think the body of our Saviour in heaven is in the same state as it was after his death on the cross, and that it will be so for all eternity."

Q. 82. Why did Christ, after his resurrection, not appear visibly to all the people? for St. Paul says: "Christ was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25.) Why did he not appear at least to his enemies; for their testimony would be of more weight than that of his disciples?

By the light of reason we all know in the same manner such things as are not above our understanding; but it is not the same with regard to supernatural things.

It is only God who can reveal them; no man can know them without a special revelation. God, however, according to his usual order of holy Providence, acts first on those who are most closely united to him, and then, through

their agency, his light and grace gradually descend upon others. Such is the case in the different orders of the celestial hierarchy. It was therefore, consistent with the supreme wisdom of Jesus Christ to manifest his resurrection, first of all to the angels, and by them to some chosen men, whose testimony was sufficient to communicate it to the rest of mankind. Hence St. Peter says: "Him (Christ) God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses pre-ordained by God." (Acts, x. 40.)

Christ appeared only from time to time to his apostles. But why did he not stay with them as he did before his death?

Christ's principal object in coming among his apostles was to manifest to them the reality and glory of his resurrection. He rendered the reality of his resurrection incontestable by conversing familiarly with them, partaking of their simple diet and showing them the wounds of his body; and he manifested his glory to them by disappearing suddenly from their sight. All this was to show, to them evidently that his life was no longer the same as before, and that he was no more subject to mortality. Hence he said to them: "You see the fulfilment of all I told you whilst I was yet with you." (Luke xxiv. 44.)

Q. 83. Why did our Saviour appear to some under a different form?

Christ wished to manifest his resurrection according to the manner in which divine and supernatural things are made known to man. This manner differs according to the disposition and aptitude of men. Thus a heroic virtue is not to be proposed to an ignorant and sensual man. "The sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God," (I. Cor. ii. 14.) A

sincere man receives divine truth with pleasure and conviction. It is for this reason that Jesus Christ appeared sometimes in his natural form. But he who is in error and doubting, does not deserve, in that disposition of his heart, to receive divine truth and grace. The disciples of Emmaus doubted and were not firm in faith. "We hoped," they said, "that it was he (Christ) who should have delivered Israel." So, Jesus Christ appeared to them under a strange form; for they were not well disposed in mind and heart. Hence St. Augustine says that the Lord could transform his body so as to assume a shape different from what it appeared to his disciples before his death.

Q. 84. What convincing proofs did Christ give of his resurrection?

Christ proved his resurrection by testimonies and signs.

The holy angels testified of his resurrection, when they announced it to the holy women at the sepulchre, according to the statement of all the evangelists. There are also the testimonies of Holy Scripture, given by himself, which are incontestable proofs of his resurrection.

The signs of his resurrection are those by which he proved that, after being risen from the dead, he had a real human body and soul reunited to it, whereas he evidently exercised the various functions of a nutritive, sensitive, and intellectual life, and the supernatural privilege by which he manifested his Divinity. He eat and drank with his disciples; he accosted them and answered their questions. This shows the perfect use of the organic powers. He also explained to them divers passages of the Holy Scriptures. This denotes an intellectual operation.

Christ proved his Divinity by various miracles and the glory of his resurrection by appearing suddenly in the

midst of his apostles without even opening the door or window of their apartment, and disappearing again as quick as lightning. This is the prerogative of a spiritual substance.

In fine, by his glorious ascension into heaven in their presence, he showed that he was to dwell no longer in this world and that it was not a fit habitation for his Divinity. "Christ," says St. Luke, "appeared to his apostles during forty days, showing them by many proofs that he was alive, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God, and then he was taken up to heaven." (Acts, i. 3.)

Q. 85. How is Christ's resurrection the cause of our resurrection?

Whatever is the first in any kind, says Aristotle, is the cause of all that succeeds. Now Christ's resurrection being the first principle of real and perfect resurrections, is the origin and cause of ours as to body and soul. "Christ," says St. Paul, "is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep in death." (I. Cor. xv. 20.) The reason of this doctrine is evident; for the principle of human life is the eternal Word of God. Hence the royal prophet says: "With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light." (Ps. xxxv. 10.)

The natural order of things established by the power and will of God requires that every cause should operate first on what is nearest to it and then extend its effect to what is further from it. Thus, the fire first warms the air which surrounds it, and then the air extends its heat to other things. So, Christ first rose from the dead by a glorious, everlasting resurrection, which he will grant also to all the faithful on the day of general judgment.

Christ's resurrection is also the resurrection of our souls in conferring on them a supernatural life; for the divine power which resuscitated Jesus Christ, acts in him

and in all his members; and so it is from this power that the soul receives grace, which is the principle of the spiritual life. Christ's resurrection offers us a perfect image of a new life, which ought to be that of a soul sanctified by divine grace. Hence St. Paul says: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we should also walk in the newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.)

Christ's Ascension.

Christ's ascension took place forty days after his resurrection.

Q. 86. It may be asked, "How could Christ as God raise himself or ascend? since there is nothing higher than divine Nature, and divine Nature is not liable to any local motion?"

It is evident that it was Christ's human nature which made its ascension into heaven. A place should always be suitable to the dignity and grandeur of the person who dwells in it; and as the earth is a place of perpetual generation and corruption, it could be no longer a fit habitation for the Son of God. So Christ ascended into heaven to sit forever at the right hand of God the Father.

Q. 87. Was it by the power of God that Christ ascended into heaven?

Christ possessed all that was natural to his divinity and humanity. Immediately after his resurrection, his human nature was in a state of glorification, so that his body moved as quick as light wherever the soul wished it; and to what place, unless the throne of eternal glory, was worthy of being the habitation of a glorious and immortal body? Jesus Christ, then, accomplished his ascension by his divine and human power. Though equal to the Father in Divinity, yet, in consequence of his humanity, it is the Father that raised him up to heaven, the same as he is said to have raised him from the dead.

Q. 88. How is Christ's ascension the cause of our salvation?

Christ's ascension increases our faith, hope and charity, the principal virtues that lead us to heaven. Enjoying the fulness of power and glory in heaven, he there prepares a place for us according to his promise to the apostles. He has traced out the way we must follow in order to see him one day in all his glory. The members shall follow the body; for, said he, "I will come again and take you to myself, that, where I am, you also may be." (John xiv. 3.)

As a pledge of our future ascension he brought with him from limbo the souls of the just, until then in banishment, far from their eternal country.

God the Father will not be insensible to our prayers and supplications, being always moved with compassion for those whose nature his ever beloved Son assumed by his Incarnation. He will not visit us with his vengeance, and chastise the human race for their folly and faults when he sees our nature risen to so high a dignity, and sanctified by the precious blood of his adorable Son, who is now our powerful mediator at his right hand on the throne of eternal glory. Placed at the inexhaustible source of all grace and glory, he mercifully communicates them to us in our exile. He ascended above all the heavens that he might fill all things, that is, the whole world with divine gifts. (Eph. iv. 10.)

Q. 89. What is the meaning of the words "Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of God the Father?" for God has no hands; he is a pure eternal Spirit.

St. Stephen, the protomartyr, says: "Behold, I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts vii. 55.) The word 'sitting' implies an attitude of honor and dignity, and principally designates

the composure and rest which Christ enjoys after the long and painful labor he suffered for our redemption and salvation. This position is a mark of distinction and also an image of the supreme, eternal power he exercises together with God the Father. Thus, a king makes the prime minister of state sit at his right hand in council, as a mark of distinction and confidence.

St. Stephen says that he saw Christ standing. This simply signifies the attitude of one who encourages and protects another; for Jesus Christ, being equal in power and glory with God, on the throne of heaven, animated his first martyr and inspired him with faith and fortitude to confess his name even in presence of his cruel enemies. St. Mark says: "And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God." (xvi. 19.) "I heard," says St. John, "all the angels saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, divinity, wisdom, honor, glory, and benediction. I heard all saying: to him who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction, honor, glory and power for ever and ever." (Apoc. v. 12, 13.)

Q. 90. Why is the power of judging the whole world attributed to Jesus Christ?

"God appointed him to be judge of the living and the dead." (Acts x. 42.)

To pronounce equitable judgment, the judge must have three qualifications, namely, power, justice, and wisdom. First he must have power to correct those who are subject to his jurisdiction; he must be just to judge them with equity and impartiality; thirdly, he must have wisdom, to act with prudence and discernment. Wisdom comprises power and justice; for no one can love justice or maintain his authority without wisdom. Hence the essence of a good

sound judgment consists principally in wisdom and truth. But Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the spiritual life of all, for he is the eternal Wisdom which proceeds from God the Father. "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son." (John v. 22.)

Q. 91. Has Christ, by his Divinity, the power of judging mankind?

"As the Father hath life in himself," says Christ, "he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself; and hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man." (John xxvi. 27.) Princes and judges of this world pronounce sentence only in virtue of divine authority of which they are representatives. Christ, however, received from God universal power over all in heaven and on earth, and was, therefore, as the Son of man, established the supreme Judge of the living and the dead. "Having a great high-priest who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace to obtain mercy." (Heb. iv. 14, 16.) We all, therefore, must be judged by him, through whose Passion and death, we obtain salvation and resurrection.

Q. 92. Did Christ merit this universal power of judging all?

Christ possesses supreme power over all; for, as the glory of a body resuscitated is due to him, not only on account of his Divinity and the glory of his soul, but also in consequence of the merits produced by the humiliation of his Passion and death; so this power redounded to him as man on account of his divine Nature, of his dignity as head of the Church, and the plenitude of his grace. So, he justly merited it, for it is conformable to divine justice that he who fought, conquered, and was unjustly condemned for it,

should be judge of the living and the dead, for he merited this by his glorious victory and triumph. "I have conquered and therefore I sit with my Father on the throne." (Apoc. iii. 21.)

Q. 93. Does Jesus Christ also exercise his juridical powers over all the angels?

"Do you not know," says St. Paul, "that we shall judge angels?" (I. Cor. vi. 3.) But the power which saints shall have to judge angels comes from the divine authority of Jesus Christ; for his human nature is more closely united to the Divinity than the spiritual substance of angels. Hence it is by the intermediate influence of this Nature that they receive celestial light; and consequently Jesus Christ has supreme power and jurisdiction over them. The great humiliation which he suffered in his Passion and death on the cross, merited for him the glorious privilege to see "That in his holy name every knee should bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and even in hell. And that every tongue should confess that he (Christ) is in the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

The angels are messengers between heaven and earth, and must render an account of their ministration to the Son of God. Hence the apostle says; "Are they not all ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) The good as well as the bad angels depend on the will and power of Jesus Christ, and can do nothing in this world without his divine interposition. The good angels served him faithfully and the evil spirits even implored his permission to enter into the bodies of swine. The devils cried out, saying: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And then they besought him, saying: If thou cast us out hence, send us into that herd of swine?" (Matt. viii. 29, 31.)

The good angels received an additional reward from him by "the great joy they feel at the conversion of a sinner." (Luke xv. 10.) The wicked spirits receive a condign punishment from him, according as he allows them to remain dispersed in this world, or wishes to keep them confined in the flames of hell.

The good angels of heaven had also received a glorious reward for their merit and fidelity from the eternal Word of God, and the rebel angels everlasting punishments for their pride and disobedience; and it is the Son of God that pronounced their irrevocable sentence at the beginning of the world.

Q. 94. As every one is judged immediately after his death, why is it, then, that he is judged again at the end of the world?

What is inconstant and changeable cannot be definitely judged until it is entirely accomplished. A decisive, absolute judgment cannot be pronounced against a man as to his future state of life. If he is good he may become better or be perverted; if he is bad, he may change his life, or commit still greater crimes. "As all men are destined once to die, so after death cometh judgment." (Heb. ix. 27.)

Though man dies, yet there remains something after him in this world: for the grave does not swallow him up all at once. He may leave a good or a bad reputation, which is sometimes contrary to truth. He lives still in his children who perhaps follow his example in virtue or vice. "His father is dead," says Holy Scripture, "and he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one after him who is like himself." (Ecclus. xxx. 4.) A man has become, long ago, nothing but dust in his grave, and is still alive in his works, many of which will be productive of the most salutary or pernicious effects, even to the end of time. How different shall be the sentence which the Almighty Judge shall pro-

nounce in favor of the authors of good books, full of sound doctrine and moral instructions, and against the authors of immoral and irreligious works which corrupt and defile the minds and hearts of thousands upon thousands.

Justice will be rendered also to our bodies ; for sometimes those of the wicked and impious will be buried with great pomp and put into grand monuments, whilst those of the poor and just scarcely receive the rites of interment and are laid in common graves.

Man's mind and heart are generally for temporal things which are all perishable, and all that regards his soul and body is subordinate to divine justice.

If you look around you in the world, you see everywhere the honest poor despised and down-trodden, while the rich, the successful thieves and gamblers are respected and honored. And when you see this around you every day, you may be tempted to ask: "Where is the justice of God? Does God really take an interest in the affairs of men?"

There are two brothers, both of Catholic parents, both brought up in the faith. The one remains faithful to his religion. He is honest but poor. His whole life is a continual struggle against poverty, sickness, and trials of every kind. He lives and dies poor, unhonored, unsung.

The other brother finds that his religion is in the way to his advancement. He renounces it; he apostatizes. He joins some fashionable sect. He finds it to his advantage to become a member of a secret society. You see him one night in the lodge. There is a bandage on his eyes. There is a rope around his neck. He takes that oath which makes him a perjurer; that oath which is re-echoed in the caverns of hell! Well, he succeeds; he grows rich; he is honored; his name is on every lip.

The faithful Catholic is poor and despised ; the apostate is rich and honored ! You see this, and you may be tempted to ask : “ Where is the justice of God ? Does God really take an interest in the affairs of men ? ”

There are two sisters. One marries a good Catholic ; but she remains poor ; she has to struggle with poverty all the days of her life. The other sister marries out of the Church. She marries some rich Protestant or infidel. Aye ! she sells her soul and the souls of her children yet unborn for a fashionable marriage. She apostatizes ; she joins some fashionable sect. She dresses in silk attire, in gold and flashing diamonds. She rolls in luxury. She moves in fashionable society. She is courted and admired. And when this apostate dies, some hireling preacher is brought, a grandiloquent sermon is preached, flowers are strewn upon her coffin, and the dear sister has gone to — glory ?

The faithful Catholic remains poor and despised ; the apostate is rich and honored. You see this nearly every day around you, and you may be tempted to ask : “ Where is the justice of God ? Does God really take an interest in the affairs of men ? ”

Look at apostate, perjured England. She has sold her faith for lust and gold. She is rich and she is honored. She boasts that the sun never sets on her dominions.

Look, on the other hand, at Ireland, Catholic Ireland. She has remained faithful to God, faithful to her religion. And what is her reward ? She is poor, despised, down-trodden. Her children are exiles, scattered to the uttermost ends of the earth. They are the Pariahs of society, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. They are the laughing-stock of the ignorant and the base-born ! And when you see all this, you may be tempted to ask : “ Where

is the justice of God? Does God really take an interest in the affairs of men?"

Short-sighted men do not see the hand of God, guiding the woof of history. It is, therefore, right and necessary that, at the end of the world when time shall cease forever, the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth should pronounce the final sentence for the general manifestation of all, both of the good, and the wicked; that, as God displayed his power and wisdom in creation, and manifested his mercy and love in the redemption, so he should also show his holiness and justice on the day of general Judgment.

CHAPTER XVI.

General View of the Liturgical Year.

In the explanation of the first commandment we have seen that the natural law obliges all men to worship God as the supreme Lord of heaven and earth. But as the natural law gives only general principles of justice and morality, it does not determine the manner and time of divine worship. Hence it is necessary that the obligations of the natural law, concerning the divine worship should be precisely determined by special divine or human law. In the Old Testament God specified, by ceremonial precepts, all that regarded the external divine worship.

All these ceremonial precepts, however, were abolished by Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, who gave us a new law, a new sacrifice, and consequently, a new divine worship. As soon as his new law was promulgated, its worship succeeded that of the old law; the same as in heaven, another worship shall succeed that of the new law, — a worship of an eternal adoration. “And I saw,” says St. John, “no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.” (Apoc. xxi. 22.)

Now, though our divine Saviour gave us a new sacrifice, the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead—yet he did not give to his Church any positive ceremonial precepts determining minutely the manner in which this holy sacrifice is to be celebrated. He gave to his Church all his power, and consequently also the power to regulate the divine worship of the new Testament.

Now, the Church has adopted an order of religious ceremonies for her external worship. This order of religious ceremonies is called liturgy. This liturgy may be said to be the compendium of the external worship prescribed and deposited by the Church in her official books, which are for that reason called *liturgical* books.

The principal of these books is the Missal, which the priest uses in saying Mass. In this book is unfolded the entire ecclesiastical year from Advent to All Saints' — the beginning and end of it.

The liturgy is composed of a series of sacred offices relating to the various mysteries of religion, which periodically succeed one another in the course of the year.

In this liturgical cycle first appear the three great feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost: Next come the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and those of the holy apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins; and finally the feast of All Saints, on which day we honor the whole multitude of the saints and blessed in heaven.

The few days that are not saints' days are, nevertheless, sanctified by offices proper to them and are called *ferias*, from which name the Church wishes her ministers to understand that, though these days are, as it were, but ordinary days, they are given to them to be devoted to the praises of God.

The celebration of feasts is marked by special ceremonies.

Man is by nature or habit such that, what is common and always before his eyes, makes less impression upon him. Hence kings and princes, to enhance their personal dignity and grandeur, are clad in costly robes, and live in vast, magnificent palaces. Is it not then fit and proper that every feast should have its particular character, its

ceremonies and its color. There are five liturgical colors—white, red, green, purple and black.

a) *White*, which is used at Easter, and the other feasts of our Lord, of his holy Mother, and the holy confessors and virgins.

b) *Red*, which is the color of fire and blood is reserved for Pentecost, and the feasts of the martyrs.

c) *Green*, signifies hope.

d) *Purple*, signifies penance.

e) *Black*, signifies mourning, and the prayers for the dead. The several colors which are thus set apart for the different solemnities, give to each an appropriate outward character.

The Church, knowing that the time of our life on earth is given us only as a pathway to lead us to our eternal home in heaven, has wisely divided this time into the annual period and the weekly period—a division established by God himself.

The hebdomadary period, or the week which is taken from the history of the creation of the world, represents the short duration of our mortal life—a life of labor and sorrow—that will be followed by eternal rest in heaven. The Church sanctifies the days of the week by the holy day of Sunday. She goes so far as even to impress each individual day with a sacred character; so that the attentive Christian may every week behold the principal mysteries of his faith unfolded to his view. Thus, Sunday is especially consecrated to the resurrection of our Lord; Friday, to his Passion; Thursday, to the mystery of the blessed Eucharist; Saturday, to the blessed Virgin; Monday, to the blessed Trinity; Tuesday, to the holy Angels; and Wednesday, to the holy Apostles. This is indicated

by the rules of the Missal, which reveal to us the mind of the Church.

The *annual period*, which is called the ecclesiastical year, rests upon the feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, the three greatest solemnities, of which the most important is that of Easter, the movable centre of the whole liturgical order. These three solemnities remind us of the three Persons of the adorable Trinity. Christmas is, as it were, the festival of the infinite love of God the Father, who gives his only Son to the world; Easter, the festival of the infinite love of the Son of God, who dies for us on the cross; and Pentecost is the festival of the infinite love of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, who communicates himself to the Church.

The festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost are like three cardinal points in the ecclesiastical liturgy. To the festival of Christmas are linked the feasts of the Sacred Infancy and the hidden life of our Lord; to that of Easter, the mysteries of the public life, of the Passion and the Ascension; and with Pentecost are connected the mysteries of grace poured out by the Holy Ghost into the souls of men. The cycle of Pentecost is bound to that of Easter, and terminates with Advent.

During the period of about six months following the feast of Pentecost the eye of faith beholds the completion of the majestic construction of the Church, which founded on the rock of truth, fructified by the blood of Christ, fortified by all the succors of grace and the helps of the Holy Spirit, constitutes, and will constitute to the end of time, the Ark of the New Covenant; that is to say, the ark of salvation for all who abandon themselves in a filial spirit to Providence within her pale.

The ecclesiastical year, then, is divided into three

parts. The first of these comprises the four weeks of Advent preceeding the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and represents the four thousand years that preceeded the coming of the Redeemer; the second part, from Christmas to the Ascension, retraces the mortal existence of our Lord when on earth; the third, namely, from Pentecost to All Saints'—or rather up to the Sunday which closes the ecclesiastical year—represents the entire duration of the Church militant on earth, until the consummation of ages.

To the final solemnity of All Saints' succeed the Commemoration of the dead, the dedication of Churches, and the feast of Holy Relics, which, in like manner, bear reference to eternal life and to heaven.

We see, then, that the liturgical order, which represents to us the history of the world and the whole life of Christianity past, present, and future, terminates in the festivals of heaven, because, for the Christians, all tends to that happy consummation. Heaven, to the eyes of faith, is the watchword of existence.

What words can describe the beauty of our festivals, their harmony with the seasons at which they are celebrated, with the mysteries they recall, and the needs of our hearts? Let us for a moment suppose the festivals no longer to exist. Life and joy would have disappeared together with them; a dull monotony would reign throughout the year; the succession of days and seasons would become wearisome and insipid; and life, especially the Christian life, would become as it were impossible.

The solemnities of the Catholic Church, giving to each season of the year its joys and Christian feelings, are a necessity. In winter our attention is fixed on the touching birth of the poor Babe of Bethlehem, the true light in darkness, the true joy of the family; in spring it is the resur-

rection of our Lord that captivates us, when nature is again springing into new life; then we have Pentecost and Corpus Christi, coming like the triumph of Christianity in the splendor of the summer days; and lastly, in autumn, when nature seems to be failing and dying, the feast of All Saints gives us a glimpse of heaven, and we are lifted by faith to that other world, where death shall be no more.

Such is the character of the liturgical year; it instructs, gladdens, fortifies and encourages us; it causes us to regard the Church on earth as an image of the Church in heaven, and, as it were, as the vestibule of paradise; it sheds over this valley of tears a few rays of heavenly joy, and makes the Christian life a prelude to a blessed eternity; it is a prolonged meditation on the wonderful order of divine worship, which has formed itself around the Presence of the Incarnate Word; it is the adoration of God in spirit and in truth in the circle of his divine acts for the redemption of mankind; it renews before our spiritual and intellectual vision,—it may almost be said before our eyes of sense,—the supreme worship of the ever Blessed Trinity, in the Communion of the Saints. Into this interior world of heavenly beauty, splendor, and peace, the Liturgy of the Church admits us day by day. What a happiness to be a practical member of the Roman Catholic Church!

THE ROGATION-DAYS.

The origin of the rogation-days, or the three days of prayer immediately preceeding the feast of the Ascension, may be traced to St. Mammertus, archbishop of Vienne in Dauphiné, in the fifth century. At his time, almighty God punished the people for their sins with wars and other great calamities and awaked them from their spiritual lethargy by the terrors of earth-quakes, fires, and ravenous wild beasts. Those wild beasts were sometimes seen in the very market-places of cities. The wicked and impious attributed those evils to blind chance; but the good and wise considered them as signs of God's anger, which threatened them with entire destruction unless they would seriously strive to avert it by sincere repentance. Amidst those scourges St. Mammertus received a token of God's mercy. A terrible fire broke out in the city of Vienne which baffled all human efforts; but by the prayer of the good bishop the fire on a sudden went out. This great miracle made a deep impression upon the people. The holy Prelate profited by this opportunity to make them sensible of the necessity and efficacy of devout prayer, and to improve their salutary dispositions to sincere compunction and penance and a true amendment of life. On Easter-night, another great fire broke out which alarmed the city more than ever. The zealous bishop had again recourse to his usual arms; he poured forth prayers with many tears, lying prostrate before the altar till the flames were extinguished in a manner which his successor, St. Avitus, calls miraculous. During this second conflagration, the archbishop formed a pious design of instituting an annual fast

and supplication of three days, in which all the faithful of the diocese should join with sincere compunction of heart, in order to appease the divine indignation by fasting, prayer, tears, and the confession of sins. As the people gladly co-operated with him, he prescribed the psalms to be sung and the rite to be observed on the three rogation-days and chose three churches outside the walls of the city to which processions should be made.

The prayers were heard; the scourge ceased, and the other French bishops introduced the same devotions into their dioceses. Towards the end of the eighth century, Pope Leo III. imposed the observance of the rogation-days as an obligation on the whole Latin Church; but, in consideration of the paschal season, he changed the fast into an abstinence. This abstinence, however, is not obligatory in the United States.

Now, the Church has established the rogations-days, in order that by fervent prayers we may avert all the numberless evils, both of soul and body, which threaten us, and obtain all that is necessary for our spiritual and temporal welfare, especially the blessings of God on the fruits of the earth at this particular season of the year when they begin to bud forth. But God will not grant these blessings to our prayer unless it is accompanied with compunction, penance, and amendment of life. We must begin to implore the divine mercy by renouncing sin as the greatest of evils, the cause of all chastisements which are or will be inflicted upon us. How can we hope that God will hear our prayer for his blessings, if we continue to offend him grievously! The sinner (see p. 93, §6.)

From the example of St. Mammertus we also learn the power of the prayer of the just man. (See chapter x., p. 255.)

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