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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Efficacy of Prayer

“But pray that your flight be not in the winter.” St. Matthew 24:20.

In those troublous times that are to precede the end of the world, during the reign of Antichrist, when everything is to be destroyed on the approach of the Day of Judgment, and men will be filled with anguish, will they then be able to do something for themselves by prayer, since Christ says that we must then pray? Truly, my dear brethren, prayer is always efficacious; we have that assurance from God himself: Ask, and you shall receive. No exception is made of time, place, or circumstances! “Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you” (St. John 16:23). No matter what it is, only pray. Do you want consolation in your troubles? Pray, and you will find it. Do you want help in persecutions? Pray, and you will surely have it. Our prayers are always heard; the prayer of the just man is never fruitless, or in other words

We always receive when we pray to God; therefore we should pray often, nay, always.

How many a sick man sighs forth his prayers for recovery, and still remains as ill as he was before? How many a poor man would have been rich long ago if his prayers for riches had been heard. How many a sad and sorrowful heart begs to be freed from the heavy burden of tribulation? O how often, how earnestly I have prayed and got others to pray for the health of my dear child, my husband or wife! But what was the good of it all? Death was unmoved by my prayers; the objects of my dearest love are now in the grave. How often have I not prayed, and I still pray, that my wicked husband or undutiful son may be converted, but all to no purpose; there is not the least sign of amendment. And now you try to persuade us that we always receive whenever we pray to God? No, I do not believe it; and will not, even if you preach a hundred sermons about it; daily experience shows me that what you say is false.

But listen to me for a moment before you decide. Suppose that you are a poor beggar, and I a rich man, you come to me and ask me for a trifle for God’s sake. I put my hand in my pocket and give you a gold-piece. What would you say to that? Oh, truly, your gratitude would be boundless, and you would ask God to reward me a thousand times. But why? Have you got what you asked from me? Yes, you say, and I am well content with it? But that is not the case; you asked for a trifle, and you did not get the trifle. Yes, you reply, but I got something very much better, for there are many small coins in what you gave me. If I got that much at every door I knock at, I should soon be a rich man. So that in that case you have no difficulty in seeing that your prayer is granted. Now that is the way in which the rich Lord of heaven distributes alms to all who knock at his door. Never does he refuse any one who asks him, especially when one is in the state of grace; we always receive from him

something a thousand times better than what we ask for.

Let no one complain that he has prayed in vain, that his prayers are not heard, that he has received nothing; but rather let every one acknowledge with thankful heart that God has bestowed on him far more than he would have dared to expect or hope for. True, you have not received the bodily health for which you have often prayed, or the temporal prosperity, or the recovery of your child, your husband, your wife. These were the miserable farthings for which you begged, and which God knew well would not be good for your soul. But instead of them you have got something that is worth infinitely more than all those things put together. Nay, if we consider the end and object of your prayers, I can well say that you almost always receive that for which you pray. Here you must remember that God often hears us without our knowledge. You pray, for instance, for fine weather, and it continues to rain; you pray for rain, and the dry spell still keeps on. Then you are under the impression that your prayer is not heard; but you are wrong. Why so? When you prayed for rain or fine weather, your reasoning will had no other object but a good harvest, and by its means the comfortable support of yourself and family. God does not give you the rain or fine weather you ask; but he either increases your income, or else saves you from some misfortune which would have done much harm to your prospects, or else he bestows a blessing on your business; in a word, in spite of the persistent drought or rain, you are well provided for, and that was your object. Thus your prayer is heard as far as its end and aim is concerned. You beg to be freed from some troublesome temptation, and you are tempted more frequently than before. You say again, God does not hear me. And again you are wrong. Why so? The object of your reasonable wish was not, surely, that you should be deprived of merit, but that you might be saved from sin: God does not free you from the temptation, but he strengthens you with his special grace, so that you do not fall into sin. Thus your prayer is heard; and the same is to be said of everything we ask from God. He acts with us as he acted with St. Paul, who asked to be delivered from the stimulus of the flesh, instead of delivering him from it, he said: "My grace sufficeth." So that it is and remains true that he who prays will certainly receive more than what he asks for.

How do most Christians spend the day? Christ warns us "that we ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1) Pray always, indeed! In the morning they awake, and their heads are at once filled with thoughts of what they have to do during the day; they do not kneel down, they say no prayer; hardly are they dressed, when, without a blessing, they go to their different occupations, and that generally without a supernatural intention, without a thought of their last end, or of God and his holy will. In the evening they think only of retiring to rest. Thus most of their days are begun, passed, and ended without prayer, without merit thus they spend whole years, until at last they find themselves poor and meritless at the door of eternity, when they will hear the words, "Time shall be no longer;" the time of meriting is at an end. Meanwhile we do not cast a thought on the immense treasure of graces we have foolishly lost, that we might easily have gained every day.

We are assured by God that we shall always receive; therefore we ought to pray always. Only come to me, he says. Ask and you shall receive. The oftener the better. Pray without ceasing, without intermission. You will never tire me, never trouble me with your importunity in knocking at my door, never exhaust my treasures. "Hitherto you have not asked anything" (John 16:24). Ask, then. Hear how he himself is more eager in begging us to pray to him, more desirous so to speak of bestowing his gifts on us, than we are to ask for or to receive them.

And now I imagine I hear many people crying out: Alas, how unfortunate our condition! While Religious in their convents having nothing to do but to pray and praise God, we have to look after our domestic affairs and to labor and run about here and there the whole day, so that we have no time to pray. In the evening we are so tired that we can only say a few prayers and hurry to bed. My good people! I see well that you do not know what prayer is. It would indeed be an unfortunate thing for you if you could only pray, as you say, twice a day. But in reality you have time enough for prayer if you wish. If praying consisted only in going to church, or moving the lips while holding the book or the beads in the hand, then you would have cause for complaint. St. Paul knew well that you must look after your households and your work; he exhorts the heads of families to do so, and tells servants that they must obey their masters with all diligence; and yet he says to all without exception: "Pray without ceasing." He knew well that work and daily domestic duties do not allow people to spend much time on their knees or with their prayer-books. No, prayer does not consist in that alone; nothing can prevent you from praying always, neither time, nor place, nor state, nor occupation, nor care, nor labor, nor sickness, nor weakness. God does not require your voice or your words, or that your knees should be always bent, or your

hands stretched out. "Prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, it is a thought, a pure intention directed to God." If you have this intention, everything will be a prayer. Therefore your work is prayer, your writing and studying is prayer, your buying and selling is prayer, your suffering and weeping is prayer, your standing and sitting is prayer, your eating and drinking is prayer, nay, even your recreation is a prayer, if all these things are done in the state of grace with a supernatural intention directed to God. See how easy it is to pray always; how easy to increase unceasingly sanctifying grace and thereby our reward in heaven; and that immense treasure is wantonly forfeited when we forget the good intention and do not direct our thoughts to God during our actions.

Moreover, the best and most useful kind of prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God, is the prayer called ejaculation, by which we frequently send up our petitions to God in a few words, or even by a mere thought, without moving the lips at all. There are many ejaculatory prayers you can use at different times according to the different circumstances you are in, or the wants you wish to have supplied. Thus you can make a short act of faith, of hope, of charity, of sorrow for sin, and renew the good intention. For instance, during your work you can say or think frequently: For thy sake, O God, I do this, and because it is thy will. In trouble or suffering: Lord, thy will be done! O my God, I have deserved this! In temptations and dangers of sin Lord, come to my aid, do not abandon me! My God, I love thee above all things! At meal-times: I thank thee, O Lord! While dressing: Clothe me, O Lord, with thy grace! The Lord's Prayer contains seven short ejaculations that are suited to every circumstance in which we can be situated. If you wish to awake confidence in God, let your prayer be: Our Father who art in heaven. If you wish to praise and bless God: Hallowed be thy name. If misfortune oppress you: Thy kingdom come. If trials are bearing heavily on you, sigh forth to God: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. If you are poor and needy: Give us this day our daily bread. If you have been offended by others and excited to anger, say to God: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. If you are assailed by temptation: Lead us not into temptation. If you are troubled at the approach of misfortune: Deliver us from evil.

Prayer of that kind like an arrow pierces the clouds and ascends to heaven, and often brings more merit to our souls than half a bookful of prayers that we say without proper devotion. In books we find the affections of others, namely those which occurred to the person who wrote them, and there is many a one who does not understand what he reads, or is not in earnest about what he is asking with his lips. Therefore St. Augustine says: "There are many who speak to God, few who pray to him." But those ejaculations come from the very depths of the heart, and are sent forth to God by an earnest will and sincere affection. We know by experience that when praying from a book we are exposed to a thousand distractions, so that at the end we often do not know what we have been praying for, or what we desire from God. There is no room for such distractions in ejaculations, so that by their means we can keep constantly in the presence of God; the soul becomes familiar with him, always keeps up a friendly conversation with him, and drinks deep at the fountain of his graces. That is the way to pray without ceasing; that is the way to receive without ceasing.

Sinners, alas, how I pity you! You cannot hope to profit by this as long as you are enemies of God; therefore repent and get out of that miserable state as soon as possible by true penance. But do not abandon prayer even while you are in sin; for if you do not merit thereby an increase of sanctifying grace, which is impossible, as you have totally lost grace by mortal sin, yet you will receive something, and your prayers will not be fruitless. If you consider your state as sinners, you will find that it is indeed a sad thing for you to be in want of everything, and to have to beg everything from that God who is your enemy, and to dare to call upon that God for help even while you are opposed to him. Yet it would be the worst of all mistakes to give up prayer because you are in the state of sin. For there is no better or speedier means of freeing yourselves from sin than to fly to God by prayer. If you neglect that means, you will fall from one sin into another, and will continue in sin until you despair of ever being forgiven. God is ready to hear you; you need no advocate nor outlay of money to be well received by him; he himself invites you to come and ask him to forgive you. Cease from sin, shed tears of penance, and then go to him. For you are not as desirous to be forgiven as he is to forgive. Pray, then, but first of all for true sorrow and repentance for your sins. Often say with the public sinner: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." By means of fervent aspirations often repeated you will obtain the grace of conversion.

Thus it is true, that when we pray we always receive from God; and no man's prayer is ever fruitless. One of two things we may be certain of much better for us. Why, then have we been so remiss in prayer hitherto, and so foolishly lost thousands of eternities of glory! We may have been punctual in saying our daily prayers, but what

is that after all? How coldly, slothfully, distractedly we have said them, without fervor, spirit, earnestness, or relish! In future, then, let us be more diligent, more fervent in prayer, and make the best use of such an easy means of enriching our souls. Amen.

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