

PRAYER.

ON PRAYER IN GENERAL.

1. Prayer is the lifting up of the mind and heart to God to render Him our homage and to beg of Him graces for soul and body. The homage to be rendered are adoration, praise, love and gratitude.

2. We are bound to pray (1) because God requires it of us (2), because Christ Himself has in the Gospels shown us how we should pray, and (3) because we are constantly in need of God's help.

3. Prayer may be *vocal* or *mental*. It is *vocal* when it is expressed in so many words, and *mental* (= *meditation*) when we commune with God only in spirit without the use of definite words.

4. Meditation is one of the most profitable of exercises for the Christian. It compels him to ponder deeply the truths of religion, thereby realizing their full value, and it makes him more fervent in the performance of his religious duties.

5. We must pray not only for ourselves, but also for our relatives, our superiors and, in a word, for all men, even for our enemies.

6. We must also pray for the souls in Purgatory that they may be quickly delivered from their sufferings to enter into the enjoyment of eternal bliss.

7. If we pray properly, God will always grant our prayer, but will do so only in the manner and at the time He deems best for us. - It is Christ Himself who given us this assurance in the clearest language (see text cited in para. 14 below).

8. *The things to ask for* should have reference to God and to our own salvation and that of our neighbour. - But we may also ask for temporal blessings, such as health, success in our undertakings, and so on, provided always that we want them for a good purpose and that we are ready to submit to whatever may be God's will.

9. We must pray often, but especially on leaving and going to bed, before and after meals, before starting work, and when exposed to danger or confronted by temptations. - It is Christ Himself who says: « We ought always to pray and not to faint. » (*Luke* XVIII, 1). It is continuous prayer to be raising up our thoughts at frequent intervals to God and to be careful to do nothing but what is pleasing to Him.

10. It is an excellent thing to have family prayers: there is no more effective way of honouring God and of securing His blessings for one's family and bringing up children in a Christian manner. Our Lord has said: « Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them. » (*Matt.* XVIII, 20).

11. *To pray properly* we must pray with *attention, humility, confidence* and *perseverance*.

12. By attention is meant that we must think only of Him whom we are addressing and of what we are saying to Him. To think of any thing else is what is called *being distracted*. So long as we remain unconscious of the distraction, the prayer is good and acceptable to Almighty God; but if, the moment we become conscious of the distraction, we do not *at once try and get rid of it*, the prayer becomes not only worthless, but an insult to Him.

13. To pray with *humility* is to remember that we are weak miserable creatures incapable of doing anything without His help. « God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. » (*James* IV, 6.)

14. To pray with *confidence* means is to have a firm conviction that God will hear our prayer according to the promise He Himself has given us: « All things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come to you. » (*Mark* XI, 24.)

15. To pray with *perseverance* means that we should never cease praying until our petition is granted. « Blessed is the man that heareth me and that watcheth daily at My doors.' (*Prov.* VIII, 34)

16. We must pray in Christ's name, because it is through His merits that our petitions are granted, and He Himself has given us this assurance: « Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask My Father anything in My name, He will give it you. » (*John* XVI, 23.)

Explanation of the Plate.

17. *The large picture* shows Moses on a hill top while a battle was raging down below between the Israelites and the Amalekites. So long as he held up both his arms Israel prevailed; as he lowered them the tide of victory turned. (*Exod.* xvii, 11.)

18. *The two small pictures on top* illustrate two cases of family prayers. In the one the whole family, including the maidservant, are assembled at night prayers before a Crucifix and the picture of the Blessed Virgin; in the other they are crossing themselves before saying grace before meat. A third example of family prayers is that of a working-class family (*see small picture on left at the bottom*) engaging in joint prayer before beginning the day's toil.

19. A model of attentive prayer is furnished to us by St. Anthony (*see small picture on right at bottom*). With demons in every shape and guise doing their best to distract and harm him, he prayed with unabated fervour, his eyes fixed on the Crucifix before him.
