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Volume VI

### *Prayer is Talking to God*

Intelligent men recognize the sovereignty and absolute dominion of God and their dependence on Him. It is in prayer that this recognition is shown in practice. To pray is a universal instinct of the human race. The desire to raise up the mind and heart to God is found even among the pagan peoples who have only the vaguest conception of God. Those who ridicule prayer ridicule one of the deepest instincts of humanity.

The foundation of prayer is the realization of the omnipotence of God, the nothingness of man and his utter dependence on God. It is, therefore, unintelligent not to pray. The man who does not pray, reduces himself to the level of the beasts.

Early in 1918 when the German offensive was threatening to bring defeat to the Allies, General Foch was appointed Generalissimo on the Western Front. The time chosen for the great counter-offensive, which was to result in the victorious conclusion of the war, was dawn of July 18<sup>th</sup>. The previous evening, General Foch left Allied G.H.Q., asking to be allowed an undisturbed hour to himself.

He had been absent some time when a dispatch rider came with a message of such importance that the Staff Officers felt that General Foch should be informed. They looked for him in his billet, but he was not there. However, his orderly, knowing the General's habits, led them to the village church. There they found him kneeling motionless before the altar.

Imagine two men sharing a cabin on a long voyage. It would be unnatural for them not to speak to one another. But suppose one of the men was completely dependant on the other—for his food, to be dressed and undressed, to be moved about; and suppose the other cared for him with the utmost devotion; what would be said of the invalid if he never so much as spoke to his benefactor? That is our position in regard to God. He is not only always with us on the voyage through life, but we are completely dependant on Him for everything, even the air we



breathe. How unnatural is it not to speak to Him, to ask Him to help us, to express our sorrow if we offend Him, to admire His goodness, to thank Him for His benefits.

### *“The Necessity of Prayer”*

Prayer is absolutely necessary for salvation. Man must dispose himself for justification, otherwise, he cannot be saved. He must, therefore, turn to God in some way.

*“Prayer is absolutely necessary for Salvation”*

*(Taken from “Prayer is Talking to God.”)*

Prayer is just as necessary for spiritual life as breathing is necessary for bodily life. Our spiritual life depends on God’s grace, and He has, so to speak, given us the power to breathe it in by prayer. Not to pray will have the same results for the life of the soul as not to breathe would have for the body—sickness and death.

Sometimes it is argued that prayer is not necessary because God knows our needs without our telling them to Him, or that God is so infinitely generous that He could not possibly make the granting of our needs conditional upon our asking Him, or that God is unchangeable and therefore we cannot hope to change Him by our prayers.

Our Lord, who is God, showed that He wished people to lay their requests before Him. He let people ask Him and then He granted their requests. Moreover, He tells us to ask and keep on asking. Consider, for instance, the parables of the unjust judge and the man coming to his friend in the night. “And He told them a parable, showing them that they ought to pray continually and never be discouraged... Will not God give redress to His elect when they are crying out to Him day and night?” (cf. Luke 18:1-8 & 11:1-14).

Nor would it be more generous on God’s part to give us all without making us ask. He has already given us very much without our asking at all. But it is His will that many other things depend on prayer. By it we are taught our rightful position in relation to God; we are trained in reverence towards Him. It is through regular prayer that the saints have received so many and so varied gifts of soul. God wants us to pray precisely that He may be even more generous towards us.

We do not change the intentions of an unchanging God by our prayers. He wills that we shall obtain certain favors if we ask for them and that we shall not obtain them if we do not ask. God, who dwells in eternity, sees all time at once, past, present, and future. Simultaneously, He sees our needs and our prayers. He always intended that if we ask certain favors, we get them. He foresees Himself granting our requests, because of our asking. Hence, God is not changed. But prayer may easily change us and make us fit to receive God’s gifts.

### *“Christ Teaching”*

By example and word, Christ taught the necessity of prayer. By example: He spent thirty of His thirty-three years in the hidden life of work and prayer. At His

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Baptism, He prayed. He went to the desert for forty days of prayer. Before His active work began He returned to the region of the Jordan. It is said that when He was at Capharnum, He departed into a desert place and “there He prayer”. Before calling the Apostles, He prayed. Feeding the five thousand, He prayed, and then went into a mountain region to pray alone. Before curing the deaf and dumb man at Decapolis; He prayed. Before St. Peter’s confession, He prayed. At His Transfiguration, He prayed. At the tomb of Lazarus, at the Last Supper, in the Garden of Gethsemani and on the Cross, He prayed.

By word: again and again, He commands us to pray. “I tell you. then, when you ask for anything in prayer, you have only to believe that it is yours, and it will be granted to you.”(Matt.11: 24). “If you only believe, every gift you ask for in prayer will be granted.” (Matt. 21:22). “ Keep watch then, praying at all times, so that you may be found worthy to come through all that lies before you, and stand erect to meet the presence of the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:36).

The saints have all been men and women of prayer, and they have all recommended prayer to their followers. “Prayer is the key of heaven.” Says St. Augustine. “Provided you keep firm and persevere in the practice of prayer, you will get to heaven.” Says St. Theresa. Similarly, St. Alphonsus: “ Pray and never give up praying; if you pray, you will certainly be saved; if you do not pray, you will certainly be lost.”

From the first, the convert must take up seriously the duty of prayer. It may be hard at first because he may not be used to it. But he will grow into it. We learn to pray by praying, as a child learns to walk by walking. Many a priest devotes hours to instructing prospective converts, but his work will be fruitful just in so far as the convert helps himself by praying.

*“Prayer is the Key to Heaven.” Says St. Augustine*

*(Taken from “Prayer is Talking to God.”)*

### *“The Conditions of Prayer”*

1. Sincerity. We must mean our prayers, never forgetting that we need God’s help more than a starving man needs the crust of bread to live.
2. Attention. This means the voluntary application of the mind to the object of prayer. Attention should be:
  - a). External: securing circumstances of time, place, position, conducive to recollection.
  - b). Internal: Spiritual—to God Himself or Our Lady or the saints to whom we pray.

Literal—to the meaning of the words and the significance of things. This is to be aimed at.

Material—merely saying the words correctly. This alone is not sufficient. “This people does Me honor with its lips, but its heart is far from Me.” (Matt. 15:8).

We must have at least external attention and the sustained purpose of worshipping God.

Note—Distractions are sinful if deliberate. They are not sinful when they are not willful or not through our own fault, or when they arise from weakness or incapacity.



3. Humility. “God flouts the scornful and gives the humble man his grace.” (James 4:6). This is why we kneel at prayer.
4. Confidence. This springs from a lively faith in the truth of God’s promises and trust in His fidelity and goodness. Remember the story of the Chanaanite woman: “For this great faith of thine, let thy will be granted.” (Matt.15:26). “God gives to all, freely and ungrudgingly; so let him ask God for it and the gift will come. Only it must be in faith that he asks, he must not hesitate; one who hesitates...must not hope to win any gift from the Lord.” (James 1:6).
5. Perseverance. It is so much easier to give up prayer than to keep it up. It takes effort. Whether we feel like prayer or not, God is still God, and equally deserving of our acknowledgement. Our Lord cured a blind man who although rebuked cried out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.”( Luke 18:39). Recall also the parable of the friend at night who continued knocking. (Luke 11:8). It is not for us to say when God will grant our petition. He may wish to try our earnestness.
6. Resignation. We must always be prepared to leave our position in the hands of God who knows best. Nor must we complain if our request is not granted. It will certainly be rewarded in some way. “Father”, He said, “if it please Thee, take away this chalice from Me; let it be only as Thou willest, not as I will.” (Luke 22:42).

Anyone can pray when he feels like it, enjoying the consolation he finds in it. But to be constant in prayer, on principle, whether one likes it or not, is true service of God and merits His special blessings.

Unanswered Prayers. The reason why our prayers do not seem to be always answered may be because some condition is lacking in us or in our prayers. But Our Lord has supplied another answer. Even a good earthly father, He tells us, will not give his son a stone when he asks for bread, or a serpent when he asks for fish, but we often ask God for a stone because we think it is bread. God knows better than we do. He gives us bread instead of the stone we are clamoring for, so that many people who are honest with themselves are able here below to thank God as much for the things they prayed for and did not get as for those they received in answer to their prayers.

### *“The Practice of Prayer”*

Everyone should know the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles’ Creed, the Confiteor, and the acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition.

The Catholic Church insists that her children must, in some measure, combine prayer with daily life, however busy that life may be. Thus she teaches them to begin the day with prayer, especially with the Morning Offering, by which every thought, word, and deed of the forthcoming day is offered to Jesus through Mary and so becomes a prayer. In the morning, God’s blessings should be asked on the day that is beginning and a promise made to do well for His sake. If possible, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass should be attended, and Holy Communion should be received. If

*“Jesus meek and Humble of Heart, make our heart like unto Thine!”*



attending Holy Mass is not possible, at least an act of Spiritual Communion should be done.

At night, the conscience should be examined, and contrition and amendment expressed, God thanked for His favors and His blessings against temptation. Suitable morning and night prayers can be found in any Catholic prayer books.

It is surely fitting that we should begin the day by addressing ourselves to God. Later, we shall talk to many of our fellow men. Let us speak to God first. Deliberate omission of morning prayers is rather like telling God we do not need His help; that we can manage quite well without Him, and that He can safely leave us to ourselves. Why should we be surprised, then, if God does leave us to ourselves—with disastrous results?

It is equally fitting that our last thought before retiring to rest should be of Him who is ever watching over us and into whose keeping we entrust ourselves when we sleep.

There is an obligation to pray when interior faith, hope, and charity oblige us to do so; on coming to the use of reason; in evident danger of death; and frequently during life. Circumstances may oblige us to pray in time of temptation, which would otherwise be difficult to overcome, as, for instance, when duty demands that we go into a proximate occasion of sin; also when some duty is to be fulfilled which requires prayer, such as receiving a Sacrament or attending Mass, in time of great personal or public necessity, and when charity to others demands it. It is fitting that we should pray morning and evening, before meals and after meals, on Sundays and Holydays.

*“Most Sweet Jesus, be not My Judge, but My Savior.”*

### *“What is Prayer”*

Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and heart to God. That is the essence of prayer. This simple definition explains much about prayer. For instance: “How, when, and why shall I pray?” One might as well ask: “How, when, and why should I converse with my best friend, who is infinitely good, and rich, and powerful, while I am sinful, poor, and powerless?” No one need elaborate instruction on such points as these. The heart of a man—his natural instinct—tells him how, and when, and why to speak, when dealing with his friend: it is the same when dealing with God.

Vocal Prayer. Prayer is divided into two main categories: vocal and mental. Vocal prayer expresses in words the thoughts of the mind, the sentiments of the heart, the aspirations of the will. The vocal element is not the chief one. The words are but a vehicle—less important than what is conveyed through them. Each prayer is useful in so far as it lifts up the mind and heart to God. Thus the value of any particular form of vocal prayer depends on how it works for the individual who uses it. It may have worked for the saint who composed it centuries ago, but it may not work for a workingman in the 21<sup>st</sup>. century. The test is: does it raise the mind and heart to God?

When we come to select our prayers, there is an almost numberless variety of printed prayers. Some have, quite obviously, special power to remind us of stirring



things, to awaken fear, to move the will, for example, the divinely taught Our Father, the Hail Mary, Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. But these are only a few. The Missal and Breviary are full of prayers; there are even many in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments; many well-known prayers have come down to us through centuries of pious usage. Every prayer book contains a multitude of prayers for many occasions and circumstances. But they all possess value to the extent that they help us to “lift our minds and hearts to God” If it works well for me, it is good for me.

We should not under value home made prayers. Sometimes people who cannot pray have written down what they would really like to say to God in time of prayer. This is really helpful. No one should hesitate about expressing himself to God in his own words. “I cannot pray; I wish I could.” Says someone. All he needs to do is to tell that to God, and he is praying. Another way of helping ourselves to pray is to take some favorite prayer and repeat the words slowly, dwelling on each as long as it yields appropriate meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation. Then we pass on to the next word, continuing in like manner.

Nor must we forget the value of aspirations. The monks of the desert preferred to make their prayers short and frequent rather than long. There are hundreds of ejaculations, which help to raise the mind and heart to God almost in an instant.

*Blessed  
be Jesus  
Christ  
and His  
Most  
Pure  
Mother.*

### *“Mental Prayer”*

Mental prayer means prayer with the mind alone. Sometimes it is called meditation, although, strictly speaking, meditation is a preparatory process and not prayer itself. Here is a very simple method of meditation:

1. Choose a subject;
2. Focus attention on it, examining it in detail;
3. In view of what then presents itself, say to God whatever it seems fitting to say.

Under #2, such simple questions as Who? What? Where? Why? When? How? May be asked concerning the subject, but the whole purpose of meditation is to raise the mind and heart to God. It is not merely an intellectual exercise. Once the purpose is achieved, cease to meditate; pray.

Of course, some people do not take kindly to meditation. Prayer may be wordless, for the use of words is certainly not indispensable to the raising of the mind and heart to God. One can pray without saying anything. “If I touch the hem of His garment,”

Secure some simple booklet on the various methods of prayer. Prayer is one of the best means by which we become fervent Catholics.

All may live in constant communion with God—with what effects?

1. The soul will receive all the graces necessary for salvation;
2. God’s goodness will be realized, sin will be hated, and every effort made to avoid it. God will be asked for help in times of temptation; love of God, and of other souls will grow; and a sincere effort will be made, with His help, to practice virtue.



3. God's gifts will be appreciated. It will be realized that we are but stewards of material things, not absolute owners. We must, therefore, be faithful stewards and try to do good.
4. Prayer will bring a sense of nearness to God, of His friendship, of His interest in each one, of His help in sorrow. This will be a new incentive to virtue.
5. Prayer means growth in concern for the next world and appreciation of the true value of this one. Gradually the attitude of mind will be developed by which everything is judged from the standpoint of eternity.

“If you would endure with patience all the adversities and miseries of this life, be a man of prayer; If you would acquire strength and courage to vanquish the temptations of the enemy, be a man of prayer; If you would crush self with all its inclinations and desires, be a man of prayer; If you would know the wiles of Satan and defend yourself against his snares, be a man of prayer; If you would live with a light heart and pass lightly along the road of penance and sacrifice, be a man of prayer; If you would drive away vain thoughts and cares, which worry the soul like flies, be a man of prayer; If you would nourish the soul with the sap of devotion and have it always filled with good thoughts and desires, be a man of prayer; If you would uproot all vices from your soul and plant virtues in their place, be a man of prayer. If you would mount to the summit of contemplation and enjoy the sweet embraces of the Spouse, exercise yourself in prayer, for it is the road that leads to contemplation and the taste of what is heavenly.” (St. Bonaventure)

“In prayer the soul cleanses itself from sin, charity is nourished, faith is strengthened, hope is made secure, the spirit rejoices, the soul grows tender, the heart is purified, truth discovers itself, temptation is overcome, sadness takes flight, the senses are renewed, failing virtue is made good, tepidity disappears, the rust of sin is rubbed away. In it are brought forth flashes of heavenly desire and in these fires the flame of divine love burns up. (St. Lawrence Justinian)

(Taken from “*This is the Faith*” by Francis J. Ripley; Published by *Catechetical Guild Educational Society*; St. Paul, Mn. *Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur* given on January 25, 1951)

“O  
Jesus,  
with all  
my  
heart I  
cling to  
Thee.”



### *Sermon by Fr. Martin Stepanich O.F.M.; Prayer; Part VI “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”*

In the second part of the Our Father, we pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” The word “bread”, as used in the Our Father, symbolizes food in general. Among ancient Hebrews, bread was the main item of food—not meat, as it is with us today. And that is the main item of food with various peoples to this very day. So, it is easy to understand why bread should be taken to symbolize all food for the body.

But what we want to concentrate on especially is, not just our daily bread, but more so the Giver of our daily bread—God the Father. It is because of Him that all our daily necessities are made possible. It is because of God's infinite goodness that man is able to satisfy his daily needs.



If every man on earth does not actually satisfy his daily needs, then, if anyone is to blame, it certainly is not God, but rather man. Man may not take full advantage of God's beneficence, perhaps he is too lazy to work. Or man may be so greedy and selfish that he prevents his fellow man from getting enough of God's blessings. Or a lack of charity may cause man to neglect his fellow man who may be in need. In cases like that, it is an awful shame that God's goodness goes to waste, so to speak, that it is expended in vain.

St. James the Apostle did very well in directing our attention to God the Father, from whom all blessings come. In his Catholic Epistle, as it is so often called, he has written: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from God above, coming down from the Father of Lights..."(1:17). The Apostle wants us always to remember who is the source of all good things that we enjoy on earth.

In view of God's goodness, it is so very appropriate that we pray before meals: "Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty..." And after meals we must never forget to pray: "We give Thee thanks, O Almighty God, for all Thy benefits..."

Now, it may be mother who prepares the meals. It may be father who with his paycheck makes possible the purchase of the various groceries needed. It may be many, many hands that are responsible for raising the food and processing it, before it is ready to be put up for sale in the stores. But, in the last analysis, we must look up to God, the bountiful Creator, who by His Almighty power and Infinite Goodness, has made all things possible for us.

How true are the words that King David the Psalmist sang, in praise of the goodness and greatness of God, so long ago. In Psalm 144, we read: "The eyes of all look hopefully to You, and You give them their food in due season; You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Ps. 144:15-16).

We can change just one word in the first part of the verse, so that it will fit for after meals: "The eyes of all look gratefully to You, O God...Yes, gratefully". That's how it is in every truly Christian home. The members of the family look to God with gratitude, for the benefits, which they have received from Him. Together, reverently and devoutly, they say the traditional "grace after meals" every day. They know that God is the One who has given them their daily bread.

In conclusion, I must not fail to remind you that, when we pray: "Give us this day our daily bread," we pray not only for the food which the body needs, but also for the spiritual food that the soul needs. We ask that the soul might receive supernatural nourishment. Above all, we ask that we might be deemed worthy to receive in Holy Communion, the Bread of Angels, the Living Bread that came down from Heaven, the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

We are concerned about the needs of the body and rightly so, but let us be ever more concerned about the needs of our immortal souls. Let us receive, as frequently as we can, the Heavenly Bread that God our Father has provided for us.

(given in Chicago, Ill. On February 2, 1964).

*" By the  
Sign of  
the Holy  
Cross,  
deliver  
us from  
our  
enemies,  
O  
God."*



## *Catechism: What is Faith?*

In the last paragraph of the Gospel, St. Mark reports these words of Our Lord : “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who refuses belief will be condemned.” St. Paul makes the solemn declaration: “It is impossible to please God without faith.” (Heb. 11:6). These two texts are sufficient to demonstrate the importance of faith.

*“O  
Good  
Jesus,  
within  
Thy  
Wounds  
hide  
me.”*

God is our first beginning and our last end;  
God has supreme dominion over us;  
We owe God due service, which we express in religion;  
True religion is the true worship of the true God;  
God has told us how He wants to be worshipped;  
Man must obey this teaching of God;  
Man has no right to practice a religion of his own making against God’s will;  
God alone can declare to us in what true religion consists. This declaration of God contains the body of revealed truths. We are bound to believe them; we must have faith in them. No one can be indifferent about such vital matters.

Even at the time of the Reformation, the necessity of Faith was never questioned. Those who left the true Church still believed in God and Christ. Nowadays many reject Faith itself and are utterly indifferent about religion. Faith, they say, is nothing more than an emotion.

No one can be received into the Catholic Church without a genuine and sincere faith in the true Catholic religion. Faith is the very foundation on which the whole religion and spiritual edifice of Catholicism is erected. It is the root holding the tree against the storms and difficulties of life and provoking the sap, which makes our religion a living force in our lives.

The solemn teaching of the Church on Faith may be summed up as follows: Faith is a divine virtue by which we believe revealed truth, not because it is known to us by the natural light of reason, but because it is known to us by the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The virtue of Faith is infused into the soul with sanctifying grace, and is lost only by a grave sin of unbelief, which a man commits by deliberately doubting or denying a truth, which he knows God has revealed.

Further, without a gift from God consisting in His enlightening and helping grace, no man can make an act of Faith profitable for salvation. Still, Faith does not deprive a man of liberty, but is a help, which he freely accepts, and with which he freely co-operates; it is not a blind movement of the mind but is in conformity with reason.

The fact of God’s existence can be most certainly known from created things; the fact that God has spoken to us can be most certainly known from miracles and prophecies. The truths, which God has revealed, are found in sacred Scripture and Tradition. Among them, are mysteries, which can never be understood by the mind of man in this life, no matter how far it may advance in knowledge.



## *“Faith Defined and Explained”*

Faith is a supernatural gift of God by which one chooses, reasonably, to believe most firmly all that God has revealed because God must know the truth and is incapable of telling a lie.

1. “A supernatural gift”. One can neither deserve nor merit it. All we can do is to pray for it, hope for it, and make every effort to fulfill the conditions appointed by God. It is supernatural, that is, not essential to our nature, not ours at birth, nor given for natural ends. If Faith is God’s gift, those who possess it are bound to thank Him for it.

2. “of God.” Only God can bestow it. No amount of instruction can, of itself, give the Faith. “Nobody can come to Me,” said Our Lord, “without being attracted towards Me by My Father.” (John 6:44). The fact that God, the Creator, Supreme Being and Infinite Good, is the Bestower of this gift, shows how precious it is. How we would cherish a personal gift from an earthly king! (Eph. 2:8).

3. By which one chooses”. We are not compelled to believe. Christ, in fact, has promised to reward our loyalty. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mk. 16:16). It is possible to lose the Faith: many have lost it although they have been intellectually convinced of the truth. Others have refused to accept the gift of Faith because of vanity, human respect, or material difficulties. That is why Christ blames unbelief: “He who refuses to believe shall be condemned.” (Mk. 16:16).

4. “Reasonably”. Everyday of our lives we accept truths on the words of men. It is, therefore, reasonable for us to accept truths on the word of God. The store of information any man can brand, as his own, without having acquired it from others, is very small. He continually accepts truth from his fellow men; in fact, dependence on them is a law of human nature. But the higher the authority, the more reasonable is the act of submission to it. God has the highest possible authority. He is absolutely infallible. Once it is certain that God has spoken, it would be the highest degree of folly to refuse to accept His word. We have more than sufficient evidence to prove that God has spoken to men. The historical facts concerning Christ and the Church can be verified by reason alone, thus justifying their Divine Authority.

Faith does not ignore reason, but presupposes it. Nor does it ever contradict reason. It teaches knowledge which is beyond, but never against, the powers of reason. It guards reason, controls reason, (as the laws of arithmetic control the accountant), but does not degrade it, any more than belief in lovely flowers degrades the blind man who cannot see them. Faith checks intellectual independence, but no more than a lighthouse checks the movements of a sailor.

5. “To believe.” Not to think, or suppose, or even to agree to, because a truth is understood and demonstrated, but to assent fully to a truth on the word of another—God. The telescope is sometimes used as an example of the function of Faith. As in the natural order, a powerful telescope will enable us to see heavenly bodies otherwise invisible to the human eye, so Faith is an additional power of spiritual “sight” rather



“insight”. It brings an interior conviction of the reality and a new appreciation of the significance of spiritual truths. One who believes, finds that they impress him ever more deeply. St. Paul describes it as “evidence”. (Heb. 11:1), and speaks of Faith as capturing the understanding. (2Cor.5:5).

6. “Most firmly.” It is to be expected, that many of the things which God reveals, are beyond reason. Nature is full of mysteries—the seed, for instance, falling to the ground, and in a few years growing to a great tree—and it is certainly reasonable to expect mysteries in religion, as it is to expect them in nature or physical science. Indeed, if religion had no mysteries and were perfectly and fully comprehensible, its divine origin would be open to suspicion. What can be fully proved by human reason might well have been discovered by human reason.

Belief in mysteries tends vastly to increase our reverence for God. When a child is afraid to go out in the dark, his father says: “Give me your hand and come with me.” The child is satisfied; he does not ask for a scientific explanation of the darkness. So we ought not to wish to understand the impenetrable mysteries of God. He is Love, Wisdom, and Goodness; we put our hand in His, knowing that He cannot lead us astray.

7. “All that God has revealed.” It is the fashion nowadays, outside the Catholic Church, to pick and choose one’s beliefs. All of God’s revelations must be accepted. Any other course is unreasonable. The Catholic Church never panders to the fashion of the moment in the beliefs she demands of her children. She stands always by what reason proves to be Divine Revelation and from it she will never deviate.

8. “Because God knows the truth and could not tell a lie.” He is all truth, and so we must believe all He has chosen to reveal. Thus, a Catholic's Faith should be:

Entire: it must embrace every article of Faith without exception;

Firm: not as accepting a mere opinion; but as believing with absolute certainty without hesitation;

Steadfast: in spite of all difficulties and opposition, and at the cost of any sacrifice;

Living: active and effectual, the basis of life;

Supernatural: having God as its source, end, and motive.

### *“The Convert’s First Act of Faith”*

In order to dispose himself for the reception of the gift of Faith, the convert should strive especially after the following:

a). Prayerfulness. “Is there any one of you who still lacks wisdom?” asks St. James, “God gives freely and ungrudgingly; so let him ask God for it and the gift will come.” (1:5). Prayer is necessary in order to obtain the gift of Faith; but Faith is not necessary for prayers. The prayer is the act of a rational being who knows by pure reason that he is a creature of a Supreme Being, on whom he is entirely dependent. Particularly during the period of instruction, the convert must pray for the gift of Faith.

b). Humility. “God flouts the scornful and gives the humble man his grace.” (James 4:6). The convert will try to understand his own infirmity, his incapacity to discover all



religious truth by unaided reason, the weakness of his will and his tendency to evil. The humble man seeks God; the proud man expects God to seek him, to allow him to adjudge of His revelation according to his arrogance. The humble man is conscious of the great privilege he is receiving, in being instructed in the true Faith with a view to reception into the True Church; the proud man thinks he is conferring a favor on the Church by entering the fold.

c). Earnestness and Conscientiousness. He must use all diligence to ascertain the truth and be willing to accept it in spite of former notions, prejudices, and the habits of a lifetime, and in spite of the additional, even seemingly irksome, duties it will entail.

d). Cleanness of heart. A special effort should be made during the period of instruction to lead a good life and check indulgence of the passions, for unchristian conduct is one of the greatest obstacles to Christian belief.

e). Sorrow for sin. Another one of the greatest obstacles in the way of receiving the gift of Faith from God is dishonesty with oneself, dragging one's conscience into denying that one has ever done evil. It is important that one who aspires to become a Roman Catholic be trained early in the practice of the ready acknowledgement of his guilt before God and the expression of his sorrow for his sins. "Anyone who acts shamefully, hates the light, will not come into the light, for fear his doings will be found out." (John 3:20). God threatens "Woe to those who call evil good." (Is. 5:20), that is, to those who deny that sin is sin.

There are people who do wrong, know it is wrong, and yet lull themselves into the comfortable feeling that it is not wrong and that they are really virtuous. God will be repelled by such an attitude of mind. Christ said that He came to call sinners to repentance. All are not expected to be saints immediately, but all are expected to admit, at least to God, that they have known the touch of evil, and that they need God's forgiveness.

Faith is the gift of God, and of God alone; yet He expects us to do our part. "He who made you without you, will not save you without you." These are the words of St. Augustine. The convert will do well to note that conviction is not necessarily Faith. For instance, he might make an act of contrition as follows: "God must be worshipped; He has revealed to us how He wishes to be worshipped; therefore, Catholicism is the authentic, divinely revealed way of worshipping God." But such a conviction, reached under God's grace, is not necessarily in itself, an act of Faith. It is one thing to recognize a duty; another thing to fulfill that duty. The act of Faith, as the Catholic Church teaches, cannot be made without a further and higher grace, without a very special help from God, and God will not deny that help to one of good disposition. He will then find himself receiving the grace of a gentle submissiveness, moving him to honor God by freely, piously, and reverently submitting his mind to God's word; this grace enables him to give effect to his conviction and to say: "I do believe that God has given me the Church to be my teacher. I do believe it on the word of the Good God Himself, who can neither deceive nor be deceived." This, then, is an act of Faith.

Faith rests not on reason but on the authority of God, who is worthy of all reverence and love. Reason can lead to Faith; it can make it quite certain that God has spoken, in other words, it can open a door which leads to a higher and different kind of

*"Sacred  
Heart  
of  
Jesus,  
I  
believe  
in Thy  
Love  
for  
Me."*



certainty, that given by the word of God. By Faith one believes not because of any argument of reasoning, but precisely because God says it is true.

To bring about the act of Faith, God so strengthens the will by His grace that it commands the ascent of the intellect, which, in turn, has been so strengthened that it obeys and accepts as true, even that which it cannot understand. Of course, God's grace does not force the soul into submission; indeed, there are those who have rejected the gift of Faith offered to them.

St. Augustine wrote: "For Thee Thou has made us, O God: our heart is restless until it rests in Thee." When a man attains to Faith, his mind slips into the socket God has made for it; there it rests securely, never to be dislodged, except by its own grave fault.

(Taken from "*This is the Faith*" by Francis J. Ripley; Published by Catechetical Guild Educational Society; St. Paul, Minn. *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* given on January 25, 1951).

*"The Following of Christ: Book IV, Chapter 15;  
The Grace of Devotion is Acquired by Humility and Self-Abnegation"*

*"The Voice of the Beloved"*

*"Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have Mercy on us."*

You ought to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask for it longingly, to wait for it patiently, and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until He comes unto you. You ought especially to humble yourself when you feel inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor grieve inordinately. God often gives in one short moment, what He has for a long time denied. He gives sometimes in the end that which at the beginning of prayer He deferred to grant.

If grace were always immediately given, and ever present at our will, it would scarcely be supportable to weak man. Therefore, the grace of devotion must be awaited with a good hope and humble patience. Still, impute it to yourself and to your sins when it is not given, or when also it is secretly taken away. A trifling matter is it sometimes that hinders or hides grace; if, indeed, that may be called trifling, and not rather important, which hinders so great a good. But if you will remove this thing, small or great as it may be, and perfectly overcome it, it shall be as you seek it.

For as soon as you have delivered yourself up to God with your whole heart, and neither seek this nor that for your own pleasure, or will, but wholly place yourself in Him, you shall find yourself united to Him and at peace; for nothing will be so grateful to you, and please you so much, as the good pleasure of the divine will. Whosoever, therefore, with simplicity of heart shall raise up his intentions to God, and disengage himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created being, he shall be the most apt



to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion. For the Lord bestows His benediction there where He finds vessels empty. And the more perfectly one forsakes the things below, and the more he dies to himself by contempt of himself, the more speedily does grace come, entering more plentifully, and the higher it elevates a heart that is free.

Then shall he see and abound, and shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he has put himself wholly unto His Hand, even forever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeks God with his whole heart, and takes not his soul in vain. Such a one, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtains the great grace of divine union; because he does not regard his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation, he regards the honor and the glory of God.

*“Sweet Heart of my Jesus, grant that I may love Thee more and more.”*

### *“Practical Reflections”*

“How we are to dispose ourselves to receive the grace of the Holy Communion, that we may profit by it.”

The end of the Holy Eucharist is to unite us intimately to Jesus Christ, and to form in our souls a moral inclination of His Spirit and His Virtues; hence, the holy Fathers call this adorable Sacrament an extension of the Incarnation; it is to perpetuate the reign of His grace and love within us, and to enable us always to live a divine and a supernatural life in and by Him. Thus the grace which the Holy Communion produces in us, is conformable to the end for which it was instituted; and is agreeable with what Jesus Christ says of it in the Gospel: for, first, it causes us to remain in Him, forming and imprinting in our souls the character of His Virtues, as a seal makes its impression upon the wax to which it is applied; secondly, it makes us live by Him and for Him, that is, act only to please Him and by the influence of His love; thirdly, it enables us to live always a life of grace. Thus, the grace, which Jesus Christ communicates to us in Holy Communion, is to establish Himself in us, to make us act in all things and live only in Him and for Him, to give us eternal life. We should dispose ourselves to receive and profit by this grace and these three effects of a good Communion; first, by separating ourselves from all willful sin, and the affection for it; secondly, by renouncing, and dying incessantly to ourselves; thirdly, by being ever faithful to the grace of God, and in the exercise of His Love.

### *Prayer*

I.) What confusion for me, O Jesus, to have communicated so often and to have profited so little by my Communions, to have been so frequently nourished with God, and to have lived always a fallen man, an idle and sensual life! Pardon, my Savior, pardon me the evil dispositions with which I have approached the Holy Communion, pardon me for having had so often a dissipated mind, a heart attached to self-love, and to the world, and for having done so little to acquire the dispositions for a good



Communion, to return Thee thanks after having received it and to reap the fruit of it, which is the re-establishment of myself in fidelity and fervor.

II). How much reason have I to fear, O my Savior, that Thou wilt one day reproach me with the unfruitfulness of my Communion! But ought I less to dread Thy just reproach for neglecting to dispose myself for frequent and worthy Communion? How I fear lest I shall be condemned for my sloth, which has kept me away from the holy table, and caused me to lose so many Communions to which Thou wouldst have attached the grace of my conversion.

III). I will therefore from henceforth dispose myself for worthy Communion by detachment from sin and the occasions of it, and by interior acts of those virtues which I ought to exercise before, during, and after Holy Communion, and I will also spare no pains to profit by my Communions, by endeavoring to watch over myself, to avoid all willful faults, to do all with a view to please Thee, to be faithful in my religious exercises, and to be courageous in restraining and conquering myself; for these are the true fruits of a good Communion. Grant me to execute what now, by Thy grace, Thou dost inspire me to resolve. Amen.

*“O  
Virgin  
Mary,  
Mother  
of  
Jesus,  
Make  
us  
Saints.”*

## *The Explanation of Our Mission and of Our Logo.*

*Since this is the first year of the “Mystical Rose”, it would seem only prudent that we explain why we call our newsletter, “Mystical Rose”, and why we have designed this Logo at the top of the first page.*

*The title, “Mystical Rose”, is taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

*The Logo of the crown of thorns, with the roses attached, symbolizes Our Lady’s suffering during Our Lord’s Passion and Death. It also symbolizes Her suffering for us, her spiritual children. The seven roses affixed to the crown of thorns represents the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.*

*We dedicate this work to Our Blessed Mother and we ask Her to help and guide us, so that we may be able to serve God’s people by printing material that will be spiritually edifying: bringing those who read it to a better knowledge of their faith; a better understanding of what God requires of them in order to achieve salvation; and a more sincere desire to serve the Living God to the best of their ability.*

*Information about Catholicism is so very necessary in order to live a good life. The world in which we live today is in dire need of that information, in order to save mankind from its own self-imposed ignorance. We hope, by the grace of God, that our newsletter will help to inform.*

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