

Application. In the choice of a state of life consult, above all things, God and the salvation of your soul. Should you, after a mature deliberation, think yourself to be called to the married state, prepare yourself for it by prayer, good works, and especially by a good General Confession, and be careful not to follow those who, by sin and vice, draw the curse of God upon their heads.

ON SACRAMENTALS.

1. What do we usually understand by Sacramentals ?

By *Sacramentals* we understand,

1. All those things which the Church blesses or consecrates for the Divine Service, or for our own pious use: as Holy Water, Oil, Salt, Bread, Wine, Palms, Altars, Chalices, etc.;

2. Also the Exorcisms, Blessings, and Consecrations used by the Church.

2. Why are such things called Sacramentals ?

They are called Sacramentals because they resemble the Sacraments, though they are essentially different from them.

3. What is the difference between the Sacramentals and the Sacraments ?

1. The Sacraments were instituted by God, and operate by the efficacy which God gave them; the Sacramentals, on the contrary, were instituted by the Church, and produce their effects by the prayers and blessings of the Church ;

2. The Sacraments have an infallible effect, unless we put an obstacle in their way; but the effect of the Sacramentals depends principally on the pious intention of the person who makes use of them ;

3. The Sacraments effect immediately inward sanctification, whereas the Sacramentals, by imparting subordinate graces, only contribute towards it, and protect us also from temporal evils ;

4. The Sacraments are in general necessary, and commanded by God ; but the Sacramentals are only recommended by the Church as useful and wholesome.

4. Why does the Church consecrate or bless the things belonging to the Divine Service ?

The Church consecrates or blesses all those things that belong to the Divine Service, as Churches, Altars, Bells, Vestments, etc., 1. In order to sanctify them, and dedicate them peculiarly to the Divine Service ; and 2. To render them more venerable and salutary to us. (Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church.)

'Every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer' (1 Tim. iv. 5). Thus, even in the Old Law, the altar and all the vessels thereof were sprinkled and anointed, as the Lord had commanded (Levit. viii. 11).

5. Why does the Church bless also Bread, Wine, the Fruits of the field, and such like things ?

The Church blesses these things,

1. After the example of Jesus Christ, who also blessed loaves and fishes (Luke ix. 16) ;

2. That 'to them that love God, all things [may] work together unto good' (Rom. viii. 28) ; and

3. That as by the sin of Adam the curse of God extended to all the creatures of the earth (Gen. iii. 17 ; Rom. viii. 20-22), so also His blessings may be poured out over all.

From our birth to our death the Church incessantly shows her love and solicitude for us : she prays for us, consoles us, helps us, blesses us ; even over our last place of rest—the cemetery and grave—she pronounces her blessing.

6. Why should we especially make a devout use of the Sacramentals ?

Because we participate through them in the prayer and blessing of the whole Church, in the name of which the Priest consecrates and blesses.

If in the Old Law the blessing of the patriarchs was so highly esteemed, how much more should we esteem the blessing of the

Church, which Christ has entrusted with the inexhaustible treasure of His means of grace and salvation!

7. Has, then, the prayer of the Church a particular efficacy?

Yes, the prayer of the Church has a particular efficacy,

1. Because she is the Body of Christ, animated and guided by His Spirit; and
2. Because her prayer is always united with the prayer of Jesus and His Saints.

8. What does the Church usually pray for when she consecrates or blesses?

She prays for the averting of the judgments of God, for protection against the devil, for peace, blessing, well-being of the soul and body, etc.

That the Church should use symbolical signs, especially the Sign of the Cross, and blessed things, as Holy Water, Holy Oils, Agnus Dei's, Palms, etc., in imparting her blessing and the fruits of her prayer, ought not to surprise us more than that God, both in the Old and New Testament, was pleased to distribute His graces and blessings to the people by means of various signs and things (see Num. xxi. 9; Tob. vi. 8 and 11; 4 Kings v. and xiii.; Mark vi. 13, etc.)

9. How should we use Holy Water?

A pious Christian sprinkles himself with Holy Water not only when he enters or leaves the Church, but also in his house, when rising and going to bed, when going out and returning, and on many other occasions; and, at the same time, he begs of God that, through the Blood of Jesus Christ, he may be more and more purified, and be protected in all dangers of soul and body.

10. Why are the people sprinkled with Holy Water before High Mass?

Because we should be pure and holy when we appear in the presence of God, and pray to Him.

Application. Beware of being indifferent to the

prayers and blessings of the Church, but respect and esteem them, and use all things blessed by the Church, especially Holy Water, with due reverence and devotion.

ON PRAYER.

1. What is Prayer?

Prayer is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God, either to praise Him, or to thank Him, or to beg His grace; and therefore it is divided into *Prayer of Praise, Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Prayer of Petition.*

2. What does *to praise God* mean?

To praise God means to rejoice at His infinite Perfections, and to glorify and adore Him on that account (Ps. ix. 3).

Examples: David in his Psalms; the three children in the fiery furnace (Dan. iii.); the Blessed Virgin (Luke i. 46, etc.)

3. Are we obliged to praise God?

Yes, we are; for this we were created, and this will one day be our eternal occupation in Heaven (Apoc. iv.)

'My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever, yea for ever and ever' (Ps. cxliv. 21). 'Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord' (Eph. v. 18, 19).

4. Must we also *thank* God for His gifts?

Yes; for ingratitude is a detestable vice, whereas gratitude is the best means to obtain new benefits.

'In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus' (1 Thess. v. 18).

5. Must we also *beg* graces of God?

'Ask,' says Jesus Christ Himself, 'and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you' (Luke xi. 9).

6. Is Prayer necessary to all?

Prayer is necessary for salvation to all who have sufficiently the use of reason.

7. Why is Prayer necessary to all?

Because God has commanded it, and because, without it, we do not receive the graces necessary to persevere to the end.

8. But does not God already know what we stand in need of?

Most certainly; but we do not pray to tell God what we stand in need of, but to acknowledge Him as the Giver of all good gifts, to testify our dependence on Him, and thereby to render ourselves more worthy of His gifts.

9. What are the principal fruits of Prayer?

Prayer, 1. Unites us to God; 2. Makes us heavenly-minded; 3. Strengthens us against evil; 4. Gives us zeal and energy for good; 5. Comforts us in adversity; and 6. Obtains help for us in time of need, and the grace of perseverance unto death.

Examples: Moses (Exod. xvii. 11); Samuel (1 Kings xii. 18); Judith (Judith ix. etc.); Esther (Esther xiv. etc.); the Machabees (2 Mac. xv. 27); the first Christians whilst Peter was in prison (Acts xii. 5, etc.)

10. How must we pray that we may obtain these fruits?

We must pray, 1. With devotion; 2. With humility; 3. With confidence; 4. With resignation to the will of God; and 5. With perseverance.

11. When do we pray *with devotion*?

When our prayer comes from the heart, and we avoid all distracting thoughts as much as possible.

'This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me' (Matt. xv. 8).

12. Are all the distractions in prayer sinful?

They are sinful when we ourselves are the cause of them, or wilfully admit or entertain them; but when we struggle against them, they increase our merit.

13. What should we do in order that we may be less distracted in our prayers?

Before our prayers we should, as far as possible, banish all worldly thoughts, and represent the Omnipresent God in a lively manner to our mind.

'Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God' (Ecclus. xviii. 23).

14. When do we pray *with humility*?

When we address our prayers to God with a sincere acknowledgment of our weakness and unworthiness.

'The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds' (Ecclus. xxxv. 21).—The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke xviii.)

15. When do we pray *with confidence*?

When we firmly hope that God will hear our prayer, inasmuch as it is conducive to His honor and to our salvation.

'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord' (James i. 6, 7).

16. Why may and ought we to have this firm hope?

Because God *can* give us all good things, and, for the sake of Jesus, *will* also really do so, as our Saviour Himself solemnly assures us, saying: 'Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you' (John xvi. 23; comp. Mark xi. 23, 24).

17. But why do we not always receive what we ask for?

1. Either because we do not pray as we ought; or

2. Because that which we ask for is prejudicial to our salvation; or

3. Because we do not persevere in praying; therefore we must also pray with resignation to the will of God, and perseverance.

18. When do we pray *with resignation to the will of God?*

When we leave it entirely to Him to hear us when and how He thinks proper.

'Father, not my will, but Thine be done' (Luke xxii. 42).

19. When do we pray *with perseverance?*

When we do not desist, although we are not aware of being heard, but continue to pray the more fervently.

Example of the woman of Chanaan (Matt. xv.); parable of the friend who asks for three loaves (Luke xi. 5-10).

20. Must we always use a set form of words in our prayers?

No; this is done in *Vocal Prayer* only; but there is also an *Interior* or *Mental Prayer*, called *Meditation*.

21. In what does *Meditation* consist?

It consists in reflecting upon the life and sufferings of Jesus, upon the Divine Perfections, or other truths of our religion, in order to excite in our hearts pious sentiments, but especially good and efficacious resolutions.

22. When ought we to pray?

Christ says 'that we ought always to pray, and not to faint' (Luke xviii. 1).

23. How is it possible to pray always?

We pray always when we frequently raise up our minds and hearts to God, and offer up to Him all our labors, sufferings, and pleasures. Yet at certain times we are to pray in an especial manner.

24. When are we thus especially to pray?

1. In time of temptation and other urgent need, and during private and public calamities; 2. In the morning and at night; before and after meals; when the Angelus bell rings; and when we are in the Church.

25. Why should we particularly pray in the Church?

Because the Church is especially the house of God and of prayer, where all that we see and hear is intended to raise our minds and hearts to the meditation on Divine things.

26. For whom must we pray?

We must pray for all men: for the living and the dead; for friends and enemies; especially for our parents, brothers and sisters, benefactors, spiritual and temporal Superiors, and also for heretics and infidels.

'I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity' (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2).

Application. Consider how happy you are that you, a miserable worm of the earth, are allowed to speak to God, the Most High, as a child speaks to his father. Pray, therefore, often and willingly, and always with as much devotion as you possibly can, both at home and in the Church.

§ 1. *On the Lord's Prayer.*

27. Which is the most excellent of all prayers?

The most excellent of all prayers is the *Our Father*, or the *Lord's Prayer*.

28. Why is the *Our Father* called the *Lord's Prayer*?

Because Christ our Lord has taught it to us, and commanded us to say it (Matt. vi. 9-13).

29. What does the Lord's Prayer contain?

It contains a short *Preface* and *Seven Petitions*.

30. What do you call its *Preface*?
These words: '*Our Father who art in Heaven.*'

31. What does the *Father* remind us of?
That God is our *Father*, so good and so worthy of veneration that there is no earthly father like Him; and that we, therefore, ought to pray to Him with a child-like reverence, love, and confidence.

32. Why do we say *our* Father, and not *my* Father?
Because, God being the Father of *all* men, we are all His children, and should therefore love one another as brothers, and pray for one another (Mal. ii. 10).

33. Why do we add these words: '*Who art in Heaven*'?

To call to our mind,

1. That God, though he is everywhere, dwells especially in Heaven, where we shall one day see Him face to face (1 Cor. xiii. 12);

2. That we are but pilgrims upon earth, and that our true country is in Heaven; and

3. That when we pray, we must detach our hearts from all earthly things, and raise them up to Heaven.

34. What do we ask for in the *First* Petition: '*Hallowed be Thy name*'?

That the name of God may never be profaned or blasphemed, but that God may be rightly known, loved, and honored by us and by all men.

35. Why is this the *First* Petition?

Because we are to esteem the honor and glory of God more than all things else.

36. What do we ask for in the *Second* Petition: '*Thy Kingdom come*'?

1. That the kingdom of God, the Church, may be more and more extended upon earth;

2. That the kingdom of divine grace and love may now be established in our hearts, in order that,

3. After this life, we may all be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven.

37. What is the meaning of the *Third* Petition: '*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*'?

1. We ask that we and all men may do the will of God on earth as faithfully and cheerfully as the Angels and Saints do it in Heaven; and

2. We profess that, in all things, we submit ourselves to the holy will of God.

38. What do we ask for in the *Fourth* Petition: '*Give us this day our daily bread*'?

We ask that God would give us all that is daily necessary for our soul and body.

39. Why does Christ bid us ask for our *daily* bread only?

To teach us that we should wish only for necessities, not for riches and abundance.

'Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content' (1 Tim. vi. 8).

40. What do we ask for in the *Fifth* Petition: '*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*'?

That God would so forgive us all our sins as we forgive others who have offended us.

41. May those who do not forgive expect forgiveness themselves?

No; on the contrary, they pass judgment upon themselves as often as they say the *Our Father*.

'Forgive thy neighbor if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest' (Ecclus. xxviii. 2).

42. What do we ask for in the *Sixth* Petition: '*Lead us not into temptation*'?

We ask that God would remove from us all temptations and all the dangers of sin, or, at least, give us grace sufficient to resist them.

43. By whom are we tempted to sin ?

1. By our own Flesh or Concupiscence ; 'for the flesh lusteth against the spirit' (Gal. v. 17) ;
2. By the World—*i.e.*, by its vain pomps, bad examples, and wicked maxims ; and
3. By the Devil, 'who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour' (1 Pet. v. 8).

44. Why does God permit us to be tempted ?

1. To keep us humble ;
2. To try our faithfulness or to punish our unfaithfulness ; and
3. To increase our zeal for virtue, and our merits.

1. 'Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me' (2 Cor. xii. 7). 2. 'The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, or no' (Deut. xiii. 3). 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him' (James i. 12).

45. Is temptation in itself a sin ?

Temptation in itself is not a sin ; but to expose ourselves heedlessly to temptation, or to yield to it, is a sin.

For our consolation and instruction, Christ Himself allowed the Devil to tempt Him (Matt. iv.)

46. What must we do in order that we may not yield ?

We must especially watch and pray, as Christ our Lord says : 'Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation' (Matt. xxvi. 41).

47. What do we ask for in the *Seventh* Petition : 'But deliver us from evil' ?

That God would preserve us from all evil of soul and body, especially from sin and eternal damnation.

48. Why do we add the word 'Amen,' or 'So be it' ?

To express by it our ardent desire, and also our confidence, of being heard.

Application. Always say the Lord's Prayer with reverential attention, remembering that we have received it from our Divine Redeemer Himself.

§ 2. *On the Angelical Salutation.*

49. What prayer do Catholics usually say after the *Our Father* ?

The prayer which is said in honor of the Mother of God, and is called the *Angelical Salutation*, or *Hail Mary*.

50. Why do we add the Angelical Salutation to the Lord's Prayer ?

That the Most Blessed Mother of God may second our weak prayer by her powerful intercession with her Divine Son.

51. How many parts has the Hail Mary ?

Two parts : *A Prayer of Praise* and *a Prayer of Petition*.

52. Of what is the *Prayer of Praise* composed ?

1. Of the words of the Archangel Gabriel : '*Hail* [Mary], *full of grace, the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou among women*' ; and

2. Of the words of St. Elizabeth : '*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb,*' to which we add the name of *Jesus*.

'*Hail*' is a term of salutation, equivalent to '*Ave* or '*Salve*,' and means '*Be well,*' '*Health to thee,*' or '*I salute thee*' (The Transl.)

53. When did the Archangel Gabriel speak those words ?

When he announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she would become the Mother of God (Luke i. 28).

54. When were the above words spoken by St. Elizabeth ?

When Mary went into the hill country, and visited her cousin Elizabeth (Luke i. 42).

55. Why do we address Mary by these words: '*Full of grace*'?

1. Because Mary was replenished with grace, even before her birth; 2. Because she always increased in grace; and 3. Because she brought forth the Author of all graces?

56. Why do we say: '*The Lord is with thee*'?

Because God is, in a most particular manner, with the Blessed Virgin, wherefore she is justly called the Chosen Daughter of the Heavenly Father, the true Mother of the Divine Son, and the Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

57. What is the meaning of these words of praise: '*Blessed art thou among women*'?

That Mary is the happiest of all the daughters of Eve:

1. Because she was chosen before all to be the Mother of God;

2. Because she alone is a Mother and, at the same time, a Virgin; and

3. Because the first woman entailed a curse on the world; Mary, on the other hand, brought us salvation.

58. Why do we add these words: '*Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus*'?

To show that the veneration of Mary is inseparable from the veneration of Christ, and that we praise the Mother for the sake of the Son.

59. Of what is the *Prayer of Petition* composed?

Of the words which were added by the Church: '*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.*'

60. Why were these words added by the Church?

1. That we may profess by them before the whole

world that Mary is truly *Mother of God*, because her child is truly God; and 2. That we may often implore the assistance of her prayers in all our necessities, and especially for obtaining the grace of a happy death.

61. Why should we often pray for a happy death?

1. Because our eternal salvation depends on the last moments of our life; 2. Because, at that critical time, the temptations are commonly more violent and more dangerous; and 3. Because perseverance to the end of life is a special grace, for which we ought continually to pray (Counc. of Tr., Sess. 6, Can. vi. 22).

62. Has the Blessed Virgin great influence with God?

Certainly; for it has never been heard yet that any one who had recourse to Mary, and with true devotion implored her intercession, has ever been abandoned by God (St. Bernard).

63. What prayer do we say when, morning, noon, and night the bell is rung for the '*Angelus*'?

We say the following:

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. And she conceived of the Holy Ghost. Hail, Mary, etc.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word. Hail, Mary, etc.

And the Word was made flesh. And dwelt among us. Hail Mary, etc.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Even if we live in countries or in places where such public signal is not given, nevertheless, as this pious exercise is strongly recommended by the Church, and several Popes have granted many spiritual favors and indulgences to those who daily and devoutly practise it, let us be careful to say this prayer with great devotion every day in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (The Transl.)

64. Why do we say this prayer?

1. To give thanks to God for the Incarnation of Christ; and 2. To honor the Blessed Virgin, and to recommend ourselves to her protection.

65. What is the *Rosary*?

It is a very useful and easy form of prayer, mental as well as vocal, which was introduced by St. Dominic in the thirteenth century, was approved by the Church, and has, since then, always been practised and recommended by her.

This form of prayer is called *Rosary* because it is, as it were, a *chaplet* of the most beautiful prayers and meditations, wherein the principal mysteries of our religion are wreathed like fragrant *roses*. Hence the name. It is divided into three parts, each part consisting of five Mysteries. The first five are called the *Joyful Mysteries*; the next five, the *Dolorous* or *Sorrowful Mysteries*; and the last five, the *Glorious Mysteries*. It is true that in the *Rosary* the same salutation is often repeated; but this ought not to surprise us more than that, in Psalm cxxxv. the words, '*His mercy endureth for ever,*' are repeated twenty-seven times; or that the Angels in Heaven incessantly sing, '*Holy, holy, holy.*' Nor ought this practice to appear tedious to us, since the mind is, in the mean time, to be occupied with the contemplation of the Holy Mysteries.

The titles of honor, which are given to our Blessed Lady in the Litany of Loretto, as *Mystical Rose*, *Tower of David*, *Morning Star*, etc., are symbolical expressions taken from the Holy Scripture, and are applied to her on account of the eminent privileges and graces conferred on her.

Application. Honor the Blessed Virgin in a most particular and childlike manner. Implore her assistance in all your necessities and concerns, and strive eagerly to imitate her charity, patience, purity, and other virtues.

ON RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND CEREMONIES IN GENERAL, AND ON SOME IN PARTICULAR.

1. What do we understand by *Religious Ceremonies*?

By *Religious Ceremonies* we understand certain significant signs or actions, which the Church has established for the celebration of the Divine Service.

2. Why is the instruction on *Prayer* followed here by the explanation of *Religious Practices and Ceremonies*?

1. Because Religious Ceremonies have been instituted to give praise and glory to God, no less than Prayer itself; and 2. Because they help us to elevate our souls to God and to the contemplation of Divine things, and consequently to pray with attention and devotion.

3. How do Ceremonies help us to elevate our souls to God and Divine things?

They help us, 1. Because they render the Divine Service more solemn, and thereby captivate our attention, and draw it from earthly objects to God; and 2. Because they represent in a visible manner before our eyes mysteries invisible in themselves, and thereby render it easier for us to meditate on them.

4. Are not Ceremonies idle Observances?

Not at all; for, 1. God Himself prescribed, under severe penalties, several kinds of Ceremonies to the Jews; 2. Christ our Lord also used various Ceremonies; and 3. He Himself instituted sacramental signs or Ceremonies.

1. See the Book of Leviticus. 2. For instance, when He healed the man that was deaf and dumb (Mark vii.); when He gave sight to the man born blind (John ix.); when He breathed on His disciples, and imparted to them the Holy Ghost (John xx.) 3. When He instituted the Holy Eucharist, Baptism, etc.

5. But must we not adore God in spirit and in truth? (John iv. 24).