

Prayer

This pamphlet was not intended to deal with prayer in all its different aspects, but rather to identify its practical purpose. We also want to examine the abuse and often selfish use of prayer, for this can lead to frustration and even loss of faith in God. The correct understanding of Godly things is so important for the proper growth of the spiritual life that leads to sanctity. It is my sincere hope that this little pamphlet will help you to come closer to our Lord and Savior, which in turn will allow you to live a life more pleasing to Him, and one that will bring many blessings to both you and your loved ones.

Let us focus our attention first of all on what prayer is essentially all about, that being basically, a conversation with God. The talking, you might say, with God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These conversations can and should extend to our Blessed Mother Mary, as well as all the Saints in Heaven. We must never forget to pray to, and for, all our loved ones who have gone to meet their Maker.

Prayers for the Dead

It has always saddened me when priests fail to remind people to pray for the poor souls in purgatory. Even at funerals, in an effort to console grieving family members, they talk and act as though the person who has died is already in heaven. Now, we have all been told that we should not judge. Yet, when we say that someone is in heaven, we are doing just that—judging. We must remember, that no one on earth knows if a person is in heaven, purgatory, or hell, except perhaps the person in the coffin; he might have found out, and if he is in purgatory, he will be mighty upset if the priest is telling everyone that he is in Heaven. Just think of all the unsaid prayers. What a shame. The lack of understanding of the Faith does have negative consequences.

The tragedy of such an unqualified judgement by a bishop, priest, or deacon is that it tends to deny the need for prayers for the deceased. How much more time, if you can use the word “time” in eternity, will the person remain in purgatory because of this unqualified judging? Yes, we should not judge, regardless of the place we believe the deceased to be. It seems, however, that it is perfectly okay and even kind and compassionate to judge the person to be in heaven, yet not okay to judge him to be in purgatory or hell.

The Wrong Way to Pray

In the *Our Father* we pray, “*Thy will be done*”. However, when we pray is it not more like, “*My will be done*”?

We live our lives much like the people of the world. In fact, in many cases it would be difficult to distinguish us from them. Have you heard the saying “If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, then it must be a duck”? Now in the same manner if we walk like worldly people, and talk like worldly people, and look like worldly people, would not people assume that we are worldly people? A question we must ask ourselves is: Can one live like the world and at the same time be a good Catholic? Can one live like the world and not have the same problems as the world? Are you having similar problems as your friends who are not Catholics? Are you having similar problems as Catholics who do not practice their Faith? Have you dismissed your problems by convincing yourself that the problems are not of your making, but rather just a social problem that everyone has? Did you ever consider the possibility that your problems are a product of your departing from God’s ways? These are things that we all should seriously ponder.

Could it be, that when we pray, without realizing it, we are saying, “God, I messed up my kids and I messed up my marriage. Come to think about it, I pretty much messed up my whole life. Now, God, would you please correct all my mess ups that I caused because I did not think following your laws were possible? After all, we live in the twenty-first century. People would call me a religious fanatic if I followed what your Church teaches. Heck, many of your own progressive priests and bishops discourage, and in many instances deny the necessity of many of Your Church’s teachings.”

Our Prayers and Actions Must Correspond

I can remember a holy priest friend of mine say that when you pray, your actions must correspond with what you are praying for. For instance, if you are praying for financial stability, you cannot at the same time be spending your money recklessly. If your actions do not correspond with what you are praying for, then it is likely

your prayers are not sincere. We need to take prayer seriously for we are in a war, a real war. The world and the devil never cease trying to destroy our faith in God and His Holy Church.

Pray for Wisdom

Most of us pray for things: a new house, a new car, a new boat. Now, these things might be all right to pray for, and they may have some benefit for the family. However, it would be far better if we prayed for wisdom. Wisdom enables us to handle the things God has allowed us to possess in a way that will be more pleasing to Him, as well as to ourselves. Without wisdom, we are likely never to be happy, regardless of the amount of *things* we accumulate.

Wisdom enables us to see the value in Godly things: family, friends, good morals, honesty, and the ability to see the value of avoiding evil. All these things are most important in living a Christian family life. Without wisdom, we tend to become like those spoken about in Holy Scripture, ***“Those who have eyes and cannot see and ears and cannot hear.”*** Have you ever thought that the Church’s teachings were outdated, especially on artificial birth control, divorce and remarriage, or the homosexual act? Do you see something wrong with fathers rejecting their God-given duty to love, lead, and dedicate their lives to their families, or mothers putting their so-called careers above the needs of their husband and children? All these things and more are denied or overlooked by the unwise, to their own detriment. When, due to these unnatural or unwise decisions, we bring havoc into our lives, we end up praying for God to intervene and correct what we so foolishly and selfishly caused. Sad to say, we seldom realize that we are the primary cause of all our misery. That is why it is so important for bishops to make sure that future priests are taught the importance of a strong family life.

Prayers and Actions

Prayers are unlikely to correct an unstable family. Not to say that God is unable to do it— it is just that God’s order for families is there and when we choose to reject it, for whatever reason, He generally lets us suffer the consequences of our choices.

Prayer is no magic wand that can be waved and all the undesirable things in our life will disappear. No, prayer is more like an instruction manual that one receives with a complicated appliance. You read it so that you can take care of the product. Not the way you think it should be taken care of, but the way the manufacturer’s guide tells you. To disregard the manufacturer’s instruction is to jeopardize the appliance.

If we view the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by Holy Mother Church, as our instruction manual, we will go through this life with far more joy and happiness than those who reject God’s instruction manual.

Concluding Thoughts

If we can remember to view prayer as a conversation with God, we will better understand God and ourselves. Understanding self is almost as difficult as understanding God. And we can never fully understand God, but we can try.

As we come closer to understanding ourselves, we will come closer to understanding God in the sense of His great love for us. We will begin to trust, and this trust will turn into actions. That’s right, we will start doing the things that God wants of us. The understanding of self will enable us to do more because we understand more. Lack of understanding causes us to hesitate, worry, and avoid doing the things that we should because we are not sure it is the right thing to do. Doubt causes us to be timid and unresponsive to God’s Will. Faith and a strong belief in God enables us to do the unimaginable, the miraculous. Yes, miracles can be a part of our lives just by doing God’s Will, which is a lot better than finding ways to avoid His directives. Some of the faithful go so far as to seek the approval of the clergy to avoid God’s directives, all to their own demise.

Sincere prayer enables us to come closer to God, and to ourselves. It enables us to understand more and that understanding enables us to do more. ***“It is not those who say, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but those who do the will of the Father.”*** These words from Sacred Scripture will take on new meaning. Joy will replace sadness, hope will replace despair, and when suffering appears, it will be viewed as a gift that can be offered up to God for the benefit of others. Nothing is wasted, not even our sufferings.

As you can see, prayer, correctly understood and practiced, is the answer to our prayers. It is a means to come closer to God, our Creator and Lord; to Jesus, our Brother and Redeemer; and it enables us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier.