

PRAYER

Introduction:

Prayer, along with the sacraments, is the ordinary means by which God gives His grace.

Sometimes we may be deprived of the sacraments. But no one can take away this primary, sure, and effective means of receiving divine favors.

I. DEFINITION OF PRAYER

“The elevation of our soul toward God”; “It is speaking to God while loving Him” Saint Teresa.

Prayer is one of the acts of the virtue of religion (which causes us to give God the worship He deserves), along with **devotion** (readiness to devote oneself to the inner service of God), **adoration** (total submission to God's sovereignty), and **sacrifice** (offering something of value for the glory of God).

Prayer is only genuine if it proceeds from devotion.

Nature of prayer = It is the mental verb of our intelligence as it addresses God.

3 verbs:
(of our intellect)

- Verb of the heart (before any expression)
- Mental verb (expression of our intellect)
- Oral verb (expression through words)

It is the second that constitutes prayer, insofar as it is done in the presence of God, addressed to God, and out of love, with all the weight of our will.

II. THE PURPOSES OF PRAYER

Prayer has four purposes:

- Praise of God (latreutic purpose)
- Thanksgiving (eucharistic purpose)
- Honorable amends (propitiatory purpose)
- Request for grace (impetrative purpose)

It is in this last purpose that prayer formally consists, because the others are only stages or preambles. **Prayer is first and foremost a request.** It is the act of the beggar who, having NOTHING, asks God for EVERYTHING.

III. CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

There are none! God has not set any conditions. A prayer must (and need only) be a **TRUE** prayer. Even the state of grace is not necessary for a true prayer (otherwise,

how could a sinner pray and be converted?). Our Lord simply said, “*Ask and you shall receive.*”

The conditions listed in some manuals (humility, perseverance, attention, etc.) are part of the very essence of prayer, which is easy to prove.

IV. PRAYER MUST BE CONTINUOUS

“*We ought always to pray, and not to faint,*” says Our Lord.

How is this possible?

- If we understand this to mean *actual prayer* (the act of praying), it is obviously impossible and would prevent us from doing anything else.
- If we understand this to mean *virtual prayer*, it is possible, desirable, and required. Virtual prayer is the union with God that results from actual prayer and which allows us, at the slightest opportunity, under its influence, to turn to God in the present moment.
- *Habitual prayer* (mechanical, non-virtual because it is not caused by actual prayer) is not prayer, but a natural inclination.

V. EFFECTS OF PRAYER

“*Whatever you ask in my name, you will receive.*”

Prayer is infallible, always and without exception. Again, it is enough that it be a true prayer.

- ❖ **Its purpose must be undoubtedly good** (the gifts of grace, salvation, etc.). For other gifts, which are not necessarily good for us (passing exams, getting a driver's license, vacations, etc.), we cannot say that our prayers have not been answered...
- ❖ The time when we are answered has not yet come. Those who stop praying cannot say that they have not been answered either.

VI. OBJECTIONS

- Why tell God things He already knows?

Because the purpose of prayer is not to inform God (or change Him), but to change the person praying... to make them better and, therefore, to grant them what they ask for.

- Whether or not we will be answered... it is written in advance, so what does prayer add?

God takes into account the prayers that have been or will be offered to Him when He bestows His gifts.

“Do what you can and ask for what you cannot.”
“A man is worth what his prayer is worth.” Saint Augustine.