

For Novice Class, Lesson 12

Summa Theologica II, II

Q.82, art. 3,4

Q.83, a. 2,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,13,14,15,16

Q.91, a. 1,2

THE XII
CRAFT OF PRAYER

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X
DISTRACTIONS
AND
MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION
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Matthew vi, 6. 'But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.'

I ALWAYS feel that it is necessary to reassure people about prayer. They think it an extraordinarily difficult thing, not possible for them, but for monks and nuns and holy people like that. Ordinary souls have to be content with saying a great number of prayers from a book. I often think that our besetting sin is a kind of unconscious despair.

Let me reassure you. Some people feel very much depressed about it. They think there is not much prayer in their lives. They may be entirely mistaken. There may be a great deal of prayer in their lives and they do not suspect it. It is not very good for people to know how well they pray! To try to find out whether we are standing well with God is rather a perilous thing. It is not a good thing for us to be taking our spiritual temperature. But experts seem to say that prayer is a sort of spiritual thermometer. The state of our prayer would be an index of our perfection and our love of God.

That does not mean that we cannot be loving God very much unless we have an extraordinary power of prayer. There are quantities of books written about Meditation and Contemplation; but I am so habituated to the washerwoman that I make her a sort of

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spiritual thermometer,—and some other holy people I can hardly think about without tears in my eyes.

Our dear Lord said that we should pray always. It is almost impossible not to do so if we really love God. There is no life that does not have its own little time for prayer,—morning prayers and night prayers, and, thanks be to God, a little during the day. Such souls may be very much beloved by Almighty God. People get so confused; they think prayer consists only in saying something explicit, like a number of 'Our Fathers.' They are so busy washing the dishes and scrubbing the floor, they have no time for the 'Our Fathers.' They prefer to do God's Will than to talk about it. It is better to be doing God's Will than to be looking at it, just as it is better to be playing a game than looking on.

It is very important to have such simple things as morning and night prayers. That was dinned into my ears by an old theologian. He said, 'If penitents say to you that they have committed grievous bodily sins, and are very sorry, that is enough. But if they say they have habitually omitted their morning and night prayers, have a row with them.' Now, that is not a fantastic doctrine, but the teaching of a fine theologian, who realised that prayer is the voice of Faith. Other sins are not sins which argue a lack of faith. If faith is undermined, everything is undermined. It is almost impossible to get faith back if there is no sense of sin.

There is the kneeling down. It does not matter how you are feeling. Perhaps the boys are buttoning on their collars. It would not be perfect prayer; but it is prayer. Some people say, 'You are mocking God. You are being disrespectful to God.' It would be dreadful to say that. We admit the prayer could be better. It will be next time. And, anyhow, it is better than nothing at all.

It is very important to have even a minimum of deliberate prayer. There are many ways in which the Church prays. She is a dear old model. She uses all kinds of gestures, dispositions of the body. It is not all kneeling. Sometimes she is lying on her face. Please do not think it is necessary to be on one's knees for prayer. At Holy Mass the priest kneels very rarely. But going down on one's knees is a *part* of prayer, and at least twice a day we should be on our knees. In the Garden of Gethsemane our Blessed Lord was on His knees.

There are people who think they do not pray, and the very reason may be that they are constantly devoted to God's Holy Will. The day's work is quite compatible with continuous prayer. People think they are not very good hands at prayer, yet in their heart at least they may be praying all day long,—by doing God's Holy Will in all the departments of their life. A good husband and father, who is working because it is his duty to work for his family and because it is God's Will, is really praying all the time. Those of us who had such a father know that he would be quite astonished if he were told that he was praying. He would have no idea of it. Yet he was continuously doing his duty to his wife and family because it was God's Holy and Adorable Will.

A second thing we must think about is the subject of Distractions. I always say, some people haven't any distractions, and that is entirely their own fault! It is almost a grave fault. Some people have distracted heads and they do not distract their hearts at all. Perhaps one should have a distracted heart. It should burn within us. There is the prayer of Quiet and Peace, but that is not the sort of thing we should desire in this world. We must not pray because we like it; devotion doesn't mean just the consciousness of being nice and comfortable. Real devotion means

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promptitude of the will to follow the Divine Will. Some of the best prayers make us feel extraordinarily uncomfortable. I don't want to make you feel comfortable, but to make you feel right, reassured—to urge you to go on, and not to give up.

If distractions come from disorders in your life, give those up; don't give up prayer. Give up the thing that is stealing into your heart, pushing the right things out. Our dear Lord says, 'Come in and shut the door.' That means shutting out such distractions as arise from our disorderly affections. The tragedy of the Pharisee's prayer was that he had a distracted life. That is when distractions really matter. The weeds growing up in our heart are carefully tended. We are terrified of plucking them up. If we have a distracted life and are struggling terribly to put an end to it, we are pretty certain to have distracted prayers. I feel sure that the great fights in all souls begin in a moment of prayer. Something dawns upon us that we must do.

Our Blessed Lord's prayer in the Garden was not a comfortable prayer. In His sacred Humanity, He allowed distracted prayer to have its place. He redeemed us at great cost, and the cost is expressed by the distraction in His human will. It seems almost a distracted prayer,—just one phrase seems to come, like a theme of a fugue, again and again.

I feel quite certain that if we have to put an end to our distracted life, one of the best battle-fields is the battle-field of prayer. Let us come to pray. Let us enter into our room and shut the door,—the human door to the human world,—and let us pray to our Father in secret.

You know, dear children in Jesus Christ, when we really pray for spiritual things, necessary for our state of life, those prayers are always answered. It has been my experience that God answers those in

the most amazing way. I always say that I have never seen any miracles, but I have seen again and again answers to prayer, to the right kind of prayer, for the right spiritual thing. I have seen those prayers answered immediately. Other things God sometimes answers by refusing. If a child asks for poisoned food, it is not given it. God gives us something else. He is answering the heart of the desire.

Don't let us, then, be too much distracted by distractions. Let us try to put an end to distractions merely in the intelligence. It is very difficult to think and to keep our attention fixed. St. Francis de Sales said we could only keep our attention for a quarter of an hour. St. Thomas Aquinas, who knew much more about prayer, said we could only keep it during one Credo. He was a great master of prayer himself. His last few years were spent in frequent ecstasy.

One last thing I should like to speak about is Meditation and Mental Prayer. People think of it in a sort of intellectual way, 'We are getting on; we can meditate.' Meditation is a very great trouble to them. They have gratuitous self-complacency when they think they can meditate. But Meditation and Contemplation are not necessarily prayer at all. Meditation merely means *thinking*. Contemplation means *looking at something*. Meditation is merely recalling something. 'Where have I left those glasses? Let me see. I usually put them down on the dresser.' That is meditating!

Contemplation is *looking at something*. We can go up on to the common and contemplate the wonderful scene. The heather is very beautiful. We do not exactly think,—'That is heather. Those are the Surrey Hills.' But we just look at the heather and the bracken and the gorse. That is contemplation.

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Some people can think about God and they hardly know they are thinking of Him. Some can look at Him and see things 'all in one piece.' Numbers of people can meditate. There are many different ways, and we must not despise persons with different ways from ours. All thinking is not prayer. But thinking can be prayer, just as walking and talking and washing the floor can be prayer. I am not at all sure that thinking is more prayer than anything else good. But in order to do something rightly, you have to think about it beforehand. That is the special value of thinking. If we are not preparing, by our thought, to do something, I wonder what is the value of our thinking? If we think of God just for the pleasure of thinking about Him, it is not necessarily prayer at all. But thinking becomes prayer when we think about God and His Holy Will *for the love of God*. In a sense, meditation and thinking are prayer when we can't help thinking about God. We think of Him because we love Him. We may think we do not love Him. Some people reason, 'If I loved God, I should do such and such a thing, and I do not do it.' They are meditating. They love God so much, they do not even think they love Him. Prayer is in the mind and heart of quite simple people, who can't think that they love God. They have a subtle sense of despair. Actually they are on very high peaks of prayer. God is always present to them. They do not have to put themselves in the presence of God. Yet all the time they feel themselves unworthy to be near Him. They almost try to get away from Him. They are like the dear old publican. He thought God was not present to him. Really he was seeing the Presence of God 'all in one piece,'—by just beating his breast and praying the prayer which our Blessed Lord composed when telling the story. 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.' It is so beautiful. Our

dear Lord did not say, 'You have got to pray that.' He never called anyone in that way a sinner. He just told a nice little story, in which He gave us this beautiful prayer. My holy Father, St. Dominic, made that his own prayer (there are very few souls it fitted so badly!).

I find it very hard not to be impatient with books on Meditation and Contemplation which seem to belittle or overlook the Rosary. By saying the Rosary, countless numbers of people are practising contemplative prayer. At Holy Mass, it is almost impossible not to be contemplating Jesus Christ. And, almost unconsciously, we take up the attitude of sinners, unworthy to approach Him. We could not approach with a better prayer than this,—LORD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER.

VII

1. Prayer, communal and individual.

J. Hardon, S.J. Modern Catholic Dictionary.

CONTEMPLATION. The enjoyable admiration of perceived truth (St. Augustine). Elevation of mind resting on God (St. Bernard). Simple intuition of divine truth that produces love (St. Thomas). (Etym. Latin *contemplatio*, simple gazing of the mind at manifest truth; from *con-*, with + *templum*, open space for observation [by augurs]: *contemplari*, to observe, consider.)

CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE. Human life insofar as it is occupied with God and things of the spirit. Compared with the active life, it stresses prayer and self-denial as a means of growing in the knowledge and love of God. As a form of religious life, it identifies "institutes which are entirely ordered towards contemplation, in such wise that their members give themselves over to God alone in solitude and silence, in constant prayer and willing penance" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 7).

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER. In general, that form of mental prayer in which the affective sentiments of the will predominate, as distinct from discursive reflections of the mind. Or again, it is that prayer which looks at God by contemplating and adoring his attributes more than by asking him for favors or thanking him for graces received.

LITTLE OFFICE OF OUR LADY. A shortened form of the Divine Office in honor of the Blessed Virgin. It contains seven hours, but the psalms do not vary each day. Already known in the tenth century, it originated in the monasteries and was early adopted by the Cistercians and Camaldolese. Retained after the Breviary reform of St. Pius V in 1568, but no longer binding under sin. Recited by many religious communities and used as a private devotion by the faithful.

MEDITATION. Reflective prayer. It is that form of mental prayer in which the mind, in God's presence, thinks about God and divine things. While the affections may also be active, the stress in meditation is on the role of the intellect. Hence this is also called discursive mental prayer. The objects of meditation are mainly three: mysteries of faith; a person's better knowledge of what God wants him or her to do; and the divine will, to know how God wants to be served by the one who is meditating. (Etym. Latin *meditatio*, a thinking over.)

MENTAL PRAYER. The form of prayer in which the sentiments expressed are one's own and not those of another person and the expression of these sentiments is mainly, if not entirely, interior and not externalized. Mental prayer is accomplished by internal acts of the mind and affections and is either simple meditation or contemplation. As meditation, it is a loving and discursive (reflective) consideration of religious truths or some mystery of faith. As contemplation, it is a loving and intuitive (immediately perceptive) consideration and admiration of the same truths or mysteries of faith. In mental prayer the three powers of the soul are engaged: the memory, which offers the mind material for meditation or contemplation; the intellect, which ponders or directly perceives the meaning of some religious truth and its implications for practice; and the will, which freely expresses its sentiments of faith, trust, and love, and (as needed) makes good resolutions based on what the memory and intellect have made known to the will.

PRAYER. The voluntary response to the awareness of God's presence. This response may be an acknowledgment of God's greatness and of a person's total dependence on him (adoration), or gratitude for his benefits to oneself and others (thanksgiving), or sorrow for sins committed and begging for mercy (expiation), or asking for graces needed (petition), or affection for God, who is all good (love).

PRAYER, CONSTANT. The Christian practice, advocated by St. Paul, "Pray constantly" (I Thessalonians 5:17), by which a person always remains united with God. Also called the prayer of the heart, it need not be conscious awareness of God's presence. It implies that a person is constantly ready to do the will of God.

PRAYER - AND PENANCE, ARCH-CONFRATERNITY OF. See **POINTE AUX TREMBLES.**

PRAYER BOOK. A manual of prayers for private devotion by the faithful or for communal use by members of a religious community or confraternity. There is no Catholic counterpart to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer because Catholic liturgical books of prayer and chant are totally distinct from ordinary prayer books, which may contain a variety of authorized prayers, meditations, or reflective readings.

PRAYER DURING THE DAY. The third hour of the Divine Office, also called the "Middle Hour." It consists essentially of three psalms, a short biblical reading, and prayer that vary according to the time of the day they are said.

PRAYER OF CHRIST. Formerly a liturgical feast, on the Tuesday after Septuagesima, in commemoration of Christ's prayer of agony in the Garden of Olives.

PRAYER OF QUIET. A peaceful internal repose by which the soul is captivated by the divine presence. It is the result of contemplative love and is a fruit of the gift of wisdom. During the prayer of quiet the mind is specially enlightened by divine grace and a spiritual delight pervades the whole person. Although the lower faculties and senses are free to exercise their natural activities, God makes himself felt in the subtle part of the soul obscurely as the Great Reality. At first this prayer is of short duration. Under the influence of grace it becomes longer and may eventually become habitual.

PRAYER OF RECOLLECTION. Also called the prayer of simplicity, in which the soul gathers its various faculties to concentrate the mind and will on God.

PRAYER OF SIMPLICITY. Meditation replaced by a purer, more intimate prayer consisting in a simple regard or loving thought on God, or on one of his attributes, or on some mystery of the Christian faith. Reasoning is put aside and the soul peacefully attends to the operations of the Spirit with sentiments of love.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL. The General Intercession or Bidding prayer. In this the people exercise their priestly function by praying for all mankind. The prayer is normally to be included whenever there are people attending the Mass. The normal sequence of intentions recommended is for: the needs of the Church, civil authorities, and the salvation of the whole world, those oppressed by any kind of need, and the local community. On special occasions the intentions may be adjusted accordingly. It is the function of the priest to preside over this part of the liturgy by opening and concluding the Prayer of the Faithful, with an assistant reading the intentions and the congregation responding with an appropriate invocation.

PRAYER OF THE HEART. See **PRAYER, CONSTANT.**

PRAYER OF UNION. A most intimate union of the soul with God, accompanied by a certitude of his presence within the soul and a suspension of all interior faculties. With this prayer there is an absence of distractions because the soul is entirely absorbed in God. There is no fatigue, no matter how long the union may last, because no personal effort is involved, but rather an extraordinary experience of joy. The soul is left with an ardent zeal to glorify God; complete detachment from all created things; perfect submission to God's will; and great charity for one's neighbor.

ON COMMUNAL PRAYER

St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew (1256 - 1259 A.D. on Mt. 18: 19-20; lesson II., nos. 1525 - 1527; translated by Fr. Bart de la Torre, O.P., Nov. 12, 1986, from S. Thomae Aquinatis, Super evangelium s. Matthaeei lectura, ed. Raphaelis Cai, O.P., 5th ed. rev. (Turin, 1951), p. 233. An Eng. trans. of this Commentary does not exist.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, [© 1966]), chapter 18, verses 19-20:

Prayer in Common

¹⁹I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.

St. Thomas's Commentary (all Scriptural quotes are from The Jerusalem Bible):

1525. "I tell you solemnly once again....," etc. [Mt. 18:19.]

Here He posits the efficacy of prayer.

And

first He does this;

second, He gives the reason [no. 1527], "For where two or three....," etc. [Mt. 18:20.]

1526. He says, "I tell you solemnly once again....," etc.

But against this you can object that we ask for many things which we do not obtain. This happens first because of the unworthiness of the petitioners; where He says, "...two of you....," namely, you who live according to the Gospel. James 4:2-3, "You want something and you haven't got it; so you are prepared to kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires." Hence, because they do not agree, because they do not have the bond of peace: for it is impossible that the prayers of many not be heard if out of many prayers there is formed, as it were, one prayer; 2 Cor. 1:11, "You must all join in the prayers for us: the more people there are asking for help for us, the more will be giving thanks when it is granted to us." Likewise because they ask for certain things which are not expedient for their salvation: for one's petition should be for something useful, Mt. 20 [:22], "You do not know what you are asking...."

"...it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven," i.e. on high, or "...in heaven," i.e. in us.

1527. "For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them. In a meeting of the holy, not of the worldly. Ps. 110 [(111) :1], "I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart where the virtuous meet and the people assemble." "For where two or three...." Love is not in one but in many; wherefore, 1 Jn. 4 [:16] "...anyone who lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in him." Therefore, "...I shall be there with them."

[Translator's notes: 1. 2 Cor. 1:11, "...the more people....": literally, "the more persons"; this is the only place in Scripture where "person" is used in the sense of an existing individual that can think; subsequently, the term "person" in this same sense was seen by the Church, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit who inspired 2 Cor. 1:11, to be eminently applicable to the Trinity and to Christ. 2. "...expedient for...salvation....": literally, "for...health," embracing one's health here as well as hereafter. 3. Ps. 111:1 in the Grail translation, used the Liturgy of the Hours, reads: "I will thank the Lord with all my heart in the meeting of the just and their assembly." This is used at Evening Prayer II for Sun., Week III, as well as for Corpus Christi, Evening Prayer I, and Sacred Heart Evening Prayer II.]

to that virtue to have the will ready to do such things, and this is to be devout. Hence it is evident that devotion is an act of religion.

Reply to Objection 1. It belongs immediately to charity that man should give himself to God, adhering to Him by a union of the spirit; but it belongs immediately to religion, and, through the medium of religion, to charity which is the principle of religion, that man should give himself to God for certain works of Divine worship.

Reply to Objection 2. Bodily fatness is produced by the natural heat in the process of digestion, and at the same time the natural heat thrives, as it were, on this fatness. On like manner charity both causes devotion (inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one's friend) and feeds on devotion. Even so all friendship is safeguarded and increased by the practice and consideration of friendly deeds.

Reply to Objection 3. Devotion to God's holy ones, dead or living, does not terminate in them, but passes on to God, in so far as we honor God in His servants. But the devotion of subjects to their temporal masters is of another kind, just as service of a temporal master differs from the service of God.

Article 3

Whether contemplation or meditation is the cause of devotion?

Objection 1. It would seem that contemplation or meditation is not the cause of devotion. No cause hinders its effect. But subtle considerations about abstract matters are often a hindrance to devotion. Therefore contemplation or meditation is not the cause of devotion.

Objection 2. Further, if contemplation were the proper and essential cause of devotion, the higher objects of contemplation would arouse greater devotion. But the contrary is the case: since frequently we are urged to greater devotion by considering Christ's Passion and other mysteries of His humanity than by considering the greatness of His Godhead. Therefore contemplation is not the proper cause of devotion.

Objection 3. Further, if contemplation were the proper cause of devotion, it would follow that those who are most apt for contemplation, are also most apt for devotion. Yet the contrary is to be noticed, for devotion is frequently found in men of simplicity and members of the female sex, who are defective in contemplation. Therefore contemplation is not the proper cause of devotion.

On the contrary, It is written (Ps. 38:4): "In my meditation a fire shall flame out." But spiritual fire causes devotion. Therefore meditation is the cause of devotion.

I answer that, The extrinsic and chief cause of devotion is God, of Whom Ambrose, commenting on Lk. 9:55, says that "God calls whom He deigns to call, and whom He wills He makes religious: the profane Samaritans, had He so willed, He would have made devout." But the intrinsic cause on our part must needs be meditation or contemplation. For it was stated above (1) that devotion is an act of the will to the effect that man surrenders himself readily to the service of God. Now every act of the will proceeds from some consideration, since the object of the will is a good understood. Wherefore Augustine says (De Trin. ix, 12; xv, 23) that "the will arises from the intelligence." Consequently meditation must needs be the cause of devotion, in so far as through meditation man conceives the thought of surrendering himself to God's service. O indeed a twofold consideration leads him thereto. The one is the consideration of God's goodness and loving kindness, according to Ps. 72:28, "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God": and this consideration wakens love ['Dilectio,' the interior act of charity; cf. 27] which is the proximate cause of devotion. The other consideration is that of man's own shortcomings, on account of which he needs to lean on God, according to Ps. 120:1,2, "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me: my help is from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth"; and this consideration shuts out presumption whereby man is hindered from submitting to God, because he leans on His strength.

Reply to Objection 1. The consideration of such things as are of a nature to awaken our love ['Dilectio,' the interior act of charity; cf. 27] of God, causes devotion; whereas the consideration of foreign matters that distract the mind from such things is a hindrance to devotion.

Reply to Objection 2. Matters concerning the Godhead are, in themselves, the strongest incentive to love ['dilectio,' the interior act of charity; cf. 27] and consequently to devotion, because God is supremely lovable. Yet such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of Divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Preface [Preface for Christmastide], "that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible." Wherefore matters relating to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand, although devotion itself has for its object matters concerning the Godhead.

Reply to Objection 3. Science and anything else conducive to greatness, is to man an occasion of self-confidence, so that he does not wholly surrender himself to God. The result is that such like things sometimes occasion a hindrance to devotion; while in simple souls and women devotion abounds by repressing pride. If, however, a man perfectly submits to God his science or any other perfection, by this very fact his devotion is increased.

Article 4

Whether joy is an effect of devotion?

Objection 1. It would seem that joy is not an effect of devotion. As stated above (3, ad 2), Christ's Passion is the chief incentive to devotion.

But the consideration thereof causes an affliction of the soul, according to Lam. 3:19, "Remember my poverty . . . the wormwood and the gall," which refers to the Passion, and afterwards (Lam. 3:20) it is said: "I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me." Therefore delight or joy is not the effect of devotion.

Objection 2. Further, devotion consists chiefly in an interior sacrifice of the spirit. But it is written (Ps. 50:19): "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit." Therefore affliction is the effect of devotion rather than gladness or joy.

Objection 3. Further, Gregory of Nyssa says (De Homine xii) [Orat. funebr. de Placilla Imp.] that "just as laughter proceeds from joy, so tears and groans are signs of sorrow." But devotion makes some people shed tears. Therefore gladness or joy is not the effect of devotion.

On the contrary, We say in the Collect [Thursday after fourth Sunday of Lent]: "That we who are punished by fasting may be comforted by a holy devotion."

I answer that, The direct and principal effect of devotion is the spiritual joy of the mind, though sorrow is its secondary and indirect effect. For it has been stated (3) that devotion is caused by a twofold consideration: chiefly by the consideration of God's goodness, because this consideration belongs to the term, as it were, of the movement of the will in surrendering itself to God, and the direct result of this consideration is joy, according to Ps. 76:4, "I remembered God, and was delighted"; but accidentally this consideration causes a certain sorrow in those who do not yet enjoy God fully, according to Ps. 41:3, "My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God," and afterwards it is said (Ps. 41:4): "My tears have been my bread," etc. Secondarily devotion is caused as stated (3), by the consideration of one's own failings; for this consideration regards the term from which man withdraws by the movement of his devout will, in that he trusts

not in himself, but subjects himself to God. This consideration has an opposite tendency to the first: for it is of a nature to cause sorrow directly (when one thinks over one's own failings), and joy accidentally, namely, through hope of the Divine assistance. It is accordingly evident that the first and direct effect of devotion is joy, while the secondary and accidental effect is that "sorrow which is according to God" [2 Cor. 7:10.

Reply to Objection 1. In the consideration of Christ's Passion there is something that causes sorrow, namely, the human defect, the removal of which made it necessary for Christ to suffer [Lk. 24:25; and there is something that causes joy, namely, God's loving-kindness to us in giving us such a deliverance.

Reply to Objection 2. The spirit which on the one hand is afflicted on account of the defects of the present life, on the other hand is rejoiced, by the consideration of God's goodness, and by the hope of the Divine help.

Reply to Objection 3. Tears are caused not only through sorrow, but also through a certain tenderness of the affections, especially when one considers something that gives joy mixed with pain. Thus men are wont to shed tears through a sentiment of piety, when they recover their children or dear friends, whom they thought to have lost. On this way tears arise from devotion.

QUESTION 83 Of Prayer

Article 1

Whether prayer is an act of the appetitive power?

Objection 1. It would seem that prayer is an act of the appetitive power. It belongs to prayer to be heard. Now it is the desire that is heard by God, according to Ps. 9:38, "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor." Therefore prayer is desire. But desire is an act of the appetitive power: and therefore prayer is also.

Objection 2. Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iii): "It is useful to begin everything with prayer, because thereby we surrender ourselves to God and unite ourselves to Him." Now union with God is effected by love which belongs to the appetitive power. Therefore prayer belongs to the appetitive power.

Objection 3. Further, the Philosopher states (De Anima iii, 6) that there are two operations of the intellective part. Of these the first is "the understanding of indivisibles," by which operation we apprehend what a thing is: while the second

Reply to Objection 2. As stated above (I, 82, 4; I-II, 9, 1, ad 3), the will moves the reason to its end: wherefore nothing hinders the act of reason, under the motion of the will, from tending to an end such as charity which is union with God. Now prayer tends to God through being moved by the will of charity, as it were, and this in two ways. First, on the part of the object of our petition, because when we pray we ought principally to ask to be united to God, according to Ps. 26:4, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Secondly, on the part of the petitioner, who ought to approach the person whom he petitions, either locally, as when he petitions a man, or mentally, as when he petitions God. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iii) that "when we call upon God in our prayers, we unveil our mind in His presence": and in the same sense Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 24) that "prayer is the raising up of the mind to God."

Reply to Objection 3. These three acts belong to the speculative reason, but to the practical reason it belongs in addition to cause something by way of command or of petition, as stated above.

Article 2

Whether it is becoming to pray?

Objection 1. It would seem that it is unbecoming to pray. Prayer seems to be necessary in order that we may make our needs known to the person to whom we pray. But according to Mt. 6:32, "Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." Therefore it is not becoming to pray to God.

Objection 2. Further, by prayer we bend the mind of the person to whom we pray, so that he may do what is asked of him. But God's mind is unchangeable and inflexible, according to 1 Kgs. 15:29, "

But the Triumpher in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance." Therefore it is not fitting that we should pray to God.

Objection 3. Further, it is more liberal to give to one that asks not, than to one who asks because, according to Seneca (De Benefic. ii, 1), "nothing is bought more dearly than what is bought with prayers." But God is supremely liberal. Therefore it would seem unbecoming to pray to God.

On the contrary, It is written (Lk. 18:1): "We ought always to pray, and not to faint."

I answer that, Among the ancients there was a threefold error concerning prayer. Some held that human affairs are not ruled by Divine providence; whence it would follow that it is useless to pray and to worship God at all: of these it is written (Malach. 3:14): "You have said: He laboreth in vain that serveth God." Another opinion held that all things, even in human affairs, happen of necessity, whether by reason of the unchangeableness of Divine providence, or through the compelling influence of the stars, or on account of the connection of causes: and this opinion also excluded the utility of prayer. There was a third opinion of those who held that human affairs are indeed ruled by Divine providence, and that they do not happen of necessity; yet they deemed the disposition of Divine providence to be changeable, and that it is changed by prayers and other things pertaining to the worship of God. All these opinions were disproved in I, 19, 7,8; I, 22, 2,4; I, 115, 6; I, 116. Wherefore it behooves us so to account for the utility of prayer as neither to impose necessity on human affairs subject to Divine providence, nor to imply changeableness on the part of the Divine disposition.

In order to throw light on this question we must consider that Divine providence disposes not only what effects shall take place, but also from what causes and in what order these effects shall proceed. Now among other causes human acts are the causes of certain effects. Wherefore it must be that men do certain actions. not that thereby they may change the Divine disposition, but that by those actions they may achieve certain effects according to the order of the Divine disposition: and the same is to be said of natural causes. And so is it with regard to prayer. For we pray not that we may change the Divine disposition, but that we may impetrate that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers in other words "that by asking, men may deserve to receive what Almighty God from eternity has disposed to give," as Gregory says (Dial. i, 8)

Reply to Objection 1. We need to pray to God, not in order to make known to Him our needs or desires but that we ourselves may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to God's help in these matters.

Reply to Objection 2. As stated above, our motive in praying is, not Divine disposition, we may change the Divine disposition, but that, by our prayers, we may obtain what God has appointed.

Reply to Objection 3. God bestows many things on us out of His liberality, even without our asking for them: but that He wishes to bestow certain things on us at our asking, is for the sake of our good, namely, that we may acquire confidence in having recourse to God, and that we may recognize in Him the Author of our goods. Hence Chrysostom says [Implicitly [Hom. ii, de Orat.: Hom. xxx in Genes.]; Cf. Caten. Aur. on Lk. 18: "Think what happiness is

the intellective part is the chief of the acts of religion, since by it religion directs man's intellect to God.

Reply to Objection 2. It is a matter of precept not only that we should ask for what we desire, but also that we should desire aright. But to desire comes under a precept of charity, whereas to ask comes under a precept of religion, which precept is expressed in Mt. 7:7, where it is said: "Ask and ye shall receive" [Vulg.: 'Ask and it shall be given you.'].]

Reply to Objection 3. By praying man surrenders his mind to God, since he subjects it to Him with reverence and, so to speak, presents it to Him, as appears from the words of Dionysius quoted above (1, Objection 1). Wherefore just as the human mind excels exterior things, whether bodily members, or those external things that are employed for God's service, so too, prayer surpasses other acts of religion.

Article 4

Whether we ought to pray to God alone?

Objection 1. It would seem that we ought to pray to God alone. Prayer is an act of religion, as stated above (3). But God alone is to be worshiped by religion. Therefore we should pray to God alone.

Objection 2. Further, it is useless to pray to one who is ignorant of the prayer. But it belongs to God alone to know one's prayer, both because frequently prayer is uttered by an interior act which God alone knows, rather than by words, according to the saying of the Apostle (1 Cor. 14:15), "I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding": and again because, as Augustine says (*De Cura pro mortuis* xiii) the "dead, even the saints, know not what the living, even their own children, are doing." Therefore we ought to pray to God alone.

Objection 3. Further, if we pray to any of the saints, this is only because they are united to God. Now some yet living in this world, or even some who are in Purgatory, are closely united to God by grace, and yet we do not pray to them. Therefore neither should we pray to the saints who are in Paradise.

On the contrary, It is written (Job 5:1), "Call . . . if there be any that will answer thee, and turn to some of the saints."

I answer that, Prayer is offered to a person in two ways: first, as to be fulfilled by him, secondly, as to be obtained through him. On the first way we offer prayer to God alone, since all our prayers ought to be directed to the acquisition

of grace and glory, which God alone gives, according to Ps. 83:12, "The Lord will give grace and glory." But in the second way we pray to the saints, whether angels or men, not that God may through them know our petitions, but that our prayers may be effective through their prayers and merits. Hence it is written (Apoc. 8:4) that "the smoke of the incense," namely "the prayers of the saints ascended up before God." This is also clear from the very style employed by the Church in praying: since we beseech the Blessed Trinity "to have mercy on us," while we ask any of the saints "to pray for us."

Reply to Objection 1. To Him alone do we offer religious worship when praying, from Whom we seek to obtain what we pray for, because by so doing we confess that He is the Author of our goods: but not to those whom we call upon as our advocates in God's presence.

Reply to Objection 2. The dead, if we consider their natural condition, do not know what takes place in this world, especially the interior movements of the heart. Nevertheless, according to Gregory (Moral. xii, 21), whatever it is fitting the blessed should know about what happens to us, even as regards the interior movements of the heart, is made known to them in the Word: and it is most becoming to their exalted position that they should know the petitions we make to them by word or thought; and consequently the petitions which we raise to them are known to them through Divine manifestation.

Reply to Objection 3. Those who are in this world or in Purgatory, do not yet enjoy the vision of the Word, so as to be able to know what we think or say. Wherefore we do not seek their assistance by praying to them, but ask it of the living by speaking to them.

Article 5

Whether we ought to ask for something definite when we pray?

Objection 1. It would seem that we ought not to ask for anything definite when we pray to God. According to Damascene (De Fide Orth. iii, 24), "to pray is to ask becoming things of God"; wherefore it is useless to pray for what is inexpedient, according to James 4:3, "You ask, and receive not: because you ask amiss." Now according to Rm. 8:26, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Therefore we ought not to ask for anything definite when we pray.

Objection 2. Further, those who ask another person for something definite strive to incline his will to do what they wish themselves. But we ought not to endeavor to make God will what we will; on the contrary, we ought to strive to will what He wills, according to a gloss on Ps. 32:1, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just." Therefore we ought not to ask God for anything definite when we pray.

Objection 3. Further, evil things are not to be sought from God; and as to good things, God Himself invites us to take them. Now it is useless to ask a person to give you what he invites you to take. Therefore we ought not to ask God for anything definite in our prayers.

On the contrary, our Lord (Mt. 6 and Lk. 11) taught His disciples to ask definitely for those things which are contained in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

I answer that, According to Valerius Maximus [Fact. et Dict. Memor. vii, 2, "Socrates deemed that we should ask the immortal gods for nothing else but that they should grant us good things, because they at any rate know what is good for each one whereas when we pray we frequently ask for what it had been better for us not to obtain." This opinion is true to a certain extent, as to those things which may have an evil result, and which man may use ill or well, such as "riches, by which," as stated by the same authority (Fact. et Dict. Memor. vii, 2), "many have come to an evil end; honors, which have ruined many; power, of which we frequently witness the unhappy results; splendid marriages, which sometimes bring about the total wreck of a family." Nevertheless there are certain goods which man cannot ill use, because they cannot have an evil result. Such are those which are the object of beatitude and whereby we merit it: and these the saints seek absolutely when they pray, as in Ps. 79:4, "Show us Thy face, and we shall be saved," and again in Ps. 118:35, "Lead me into the path of Thy commandments."

Reply to Objection 1. Although man cannot by himself know what he ought to pray for, "the Spirit," as stated in the same passage, "helpeth our infirmity," since by inspiring us with holy desires, He makes us ask for what is right. Hence our Lord said (Jn. 4:24) that true adorers "must adore . . . in spirit and in truth."

Reply to Objection 2. When in our prayers we ask for things concerning our salvation, we conform our will to God's, of Whom it is written (1 Tim. 2:4) that "He will have all men to be saved."

Reply to Objection 3. God so invites us to take good things, that we may approach to them not by the steps of the body, but by pious desires and devout prayers.

Article 6

Whether man ought to ask God for temporal things when he prays?

Objection 1. It would seem that man ought not to ask God for temporal things when he prays. We seek what we ask for in prayer. But we should not seek for temporal things, for it is written (Mt. 6:33): "Seek ye . . . first the kingdom of God, and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you," that is to say, temporal things, which, says He, we are not to seek, but they will be added to what we seek. Therefore temporal things are not to be asked of God in prayer.

Objection 2. Further, no one asks save for that which he is solicitous about. Now we ought not to have solicitude for temporal things, according to the saying of Mt. 6:25, "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat." Therefore we ought not to ask for temporal things when we pray.

Objection 3. Further, by prayer our mind should be raised up to God. But by asking for temporal things, it descends to things beneath it, against the saying of the Apostle (2 Cor. 4:18), "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Therefore man ought not to ask God for temporal things when he prays.

Objection 4. Further, man ought not to ask of God other than good and useful things. But sometimes temporal things, when we have them, are harmful, not only in a spiritual sense, but also in a material sense. Therefore we should not ask God for them in our prayers.

On the contrary, It is written (Prov. 30:8): "Give me only the necessaries of life."

I answer that, As Augustine says (ad Probam, de orando Deum, Ep. cxxx, 12): "It is lawful to pray for what it is lawful to desire." Now it is lawful to desire temporal things, not indeed principally, by placing our end therein, but as helps whereby we are assisted in tending towards beatitude, in so far, to wit, as they are the means of supporting the life of the body, and are of service to us as instruments in performing acts of virtue, as also the Philosopher states (Ethic. i, 8). Augustine too says the same to Proba (ad Probam, de orando Deum, Ep. cxxx, 6,7) when he states that "it is not unbecoming for anyone to desire enough for a livelihood, and no more; for this sufficiency is desired, not for its own sake, but for the welfare of the body, or that we should desire to be clothed in a way befitting one's station, so as not to be out of keeping with those among

whom we have to live. Accordingly we ought to pray that we may keep these things if we have them, and if we have them not, that we may gain possession of them."

Reply to Objection 1. We should seek temporal things not in the first but in the second place. Hence Augustine says (De Serm. Dom. in Monte ii, 16): "When He says that this" (i.e. the kingdom of God) "is to be sought first, He implies that the other" (i.e. temporal goods) "is to be sought afterwards, not in time but in importance, this as being our good, the other as our need."

Reply to Objection 2. Not all solicitude about temporal things is forbidden, but that which is superfluous and inordinate, as stated above (II-II:55:6).

Reply to Objection 3. When our mind is intent on temporal things in order that it may rest in them, it remains immersed therein; but when it is intent on them in relation to the acquisition of beatitude, it is not lowered by them, but raises them to a higher level.

Reply to Objection 4. From the very fact that we ask for temporal things not as the principal object of our petition, but as subordinate to something else, we ask God for them in the sense that they may be granted to us in so far as they are expedient for salvation.

Article 7

Whether we ought to pray for others?

Objection 1. It would seem that we ought not to pray for others. On praying we ought to conform to the pattern given by our Lord. Now in the Lord's Prayer we make petitions for ourselves, not for others; thus we say: "Give us this day our daily bread," etc. Therefore we should not pray for others.

Objection 2. Further, prayer is offered that it may be heard. Now one of the conditions required for prayer that it may be heard is that one pray for oneself, wherefore Augustine in commenting on Jn. 16:23, "If you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you," says (Tract. cii): "Everyone is heard when he prays for himself, not when he prays for all; wherefore He does not say simply 'He will give it,' but 'He will give it you.'" Therefore it would seem that we ought not to pray for others, but only for ourselves.

Objection 3. Further, we are forbidden to pray for others, if they are wicked, according to Jer. 7:16, "Therefore do not then pray for this people . . . and do not

withstand Me, for I will not hear thee." On the other hand we are not bound to pray for the good, since they are heard when they pray for themselves. Therefore it would seem that we ought not to pray for others.

On the contrary, It is written (James 5:16): "Pray one for another, that you may be saved."

I answer that, As stated above (6), when we pray we ought to ask for what we ought to desire. Now we ought to desire good things not only for ourselves, but also for others: for this is essential to the love which we owe to our neighbor, as stated above (25, 1 and 2; 27, 2; 31, 1). Therefore charity requires us to pray for others. Hence Chrysostom says (Hom. xiv in Matth.) [Opus Imperfectum, falsely ascribed to St. John Chrysostom]: "Necessity binds us to pray for ourselves, fraternal charity urges us to pray for others: and the prayer that fraternal charity proffers is sweeter to God than that which is the outcome of necessity."

Reply to Objection 1. As Cyprian says (De orat. Dom.), "We say 'Our Father' and not 'My Father,' 'Give us' and not 'Give me,' because the Master of unity did not wish us to pray privately, that is for ourselves alone, for He wished each one to pray for all, even as He Himself bore all in one."

Reply to Objection 2. It is a condition of prayer that one pray for oneself: not as though it were necessary in order that prayer be meritorious, but as being necessary in order that prayer may not fail in its effect of impetration. For it sometimes happens that we pray for another with piety and perseverance, and ask for things relating to his salvation, and yet it is not granted on account of some obstacle on the part of the person we are praying for, according to Jer. 15:1, "If Moses and Samuel shall stand before Me, My soul is not towards this people." And yet the prayer will be meritorious for the person who prays thus out of charity, according to Ps. 34:13, "My prayer shall be turned into my bosom, i.e. though it profit them not, I am not deprived of my reward," as the gloss expounds it.

Reply to Objection 3. We ought to pray even for sinners, that they may be converted, and for the just that they may persevere and advance in holiness. Yet those who pray are heard not for all sinners but for some: since they are heard for the predestined, but not for those who are foreknown to death; even as the correction whereby we correct the brethren, has an effect in the predestined but not in the reprobate, according to Eccles. 7:14, "No man can correct whom God hath despised." Hence it is written (1 Jn. 5:16): "He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him, who sinneth not to death." Now just as the benefit of correction must not be refused to any man so long as he lives here below, because we cannot distinguish the

predestined from the reprobate, as Augustine says (De Correp. et Grat. xv), so too no man should be denied the help of prayer.

We ought also to pray for the just for three reasons: First, because the prayers of a multitude are more easily heard, wherefore a gloss on Rm. 15:30, "Help me in your prayers," says: "The Apostle rightly tells the lesser brethren to pray for him, for many lesser ones, if they be united together in one mind, become great, and it is impossible for the prayers of a multitude not to obtain" that which is possible to be obtained by prayer. Secondly, that many may thank God for the graces conferred on the just, which graces conduce to the profit of many, according to the Apostle (2 Cor. 1:11). Thirdly, that the more perfect may not wax proud, seeing that they find that they need the prayers of the less perfect.

Article 8

Whether we ought to pray for our enemies?

Objection 1. It would seem that we ought not to pray for our enemies. According to Rm. 15:4, "what things soever were written, were written for our learning." Now Holy Writ contains many imprecations against enemies; thus it is written (Ps. 6:11): "Let all my enemies be ashamed and be . . . troubled, let them be ashamed and be troubled very speedily [Vulg.: 'Let them be turned back and be ashamed.']." Therefore we too should pray against rather than for our enemies.

Objection 2. Further, to be revenged on one's enemies is harmful to them. But holy men seek vengeance of their enemies according to Apoc. 6:10, "How long . . . dost Thou not . . . revenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?" Wherefore they rejoice in being revenged on their enemies, according to Ps. 57:11, "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge." Therefore we should not pray for our enemies, but against them.

Objection 3. Further, man's deed should not be contrary to his prayer. Now sometimes men lawfully attack their enemies, else all wars would be unlawful, which is opposed to what we have said above (40, 1). Therefore we should not pray for our enemies.

On the contrary, It is written (Mt. 5:44): "Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."

I answer that, To pray for another is an act of charity, as stated above (07). Wherefore we are bound to pray for our enemies in the same manner as we are bound to love them. Now it was explained above in the treatise on charity (25, 8,9), how we are bound to love our enemies, namely, that we must love in them

their nature, not their sin. and that to love our enemies in general is a matter of precept, while to love them in the individual is not a matter of precept, except in the preparedness of the mind, so that a man must be prepared to love his enemy even in the individual and to help him in a case of necessity, or if his enemy should beg his forgiveness. But to love one's enemies absolutely in the individual, and to assist them, is an act of perfection.

In like manner it is a matter of obligation that we should not exclude our enemies from the general prayers which we offer up for others: but it is a matter of perfection, and not of obligation, to pray for them individually, except in certain special cases.

Reply to Objection 1. The imprecations contained in Holy Writ may be understood in four ways. First, according to the custom of the prophets "to foretell the future under the veil of an imprecation," as Augustine states [De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 21. Secondly, in the sense that certain temporal evils are sometimes inflicted by God on the wicked for their correction. Thirdly, because they are understood to be pronounced, not against the men themselves, but against the kingdom of sin, with the purpose, to wit, of destroying sin by the correction of men. Fourthly, by way of conformity of our will to the Divine justice with regard to the damnation of those who are obstinate in sin.

Reply to Objection 2. As Augustine states in the same book (De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 22), "the martyrs' vengeance is the overthrow of the kingdom of sin, because they suffered so much while it reigned": or as he says again (QQ. Vet. et Nov. Test. lxviii), "their prayer for vengeance is expressed not in words but in their minds, even as the blood of Abel cried from the earth." They rejoice in vengeance not for its own sake, but for the sake of Divine justice.

Reply to Objection 3. It is lawful to attack one's enemies, that they may be restrained from sin: and this is for their own good and for the good of others. Consequently it is even lawful in praying to ask that temporal evils be inflicted on our enemies in order that they may mend their ways. Thus prayer and deed will not be contrary to one another.

Article 9

Whether the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer are fittingly assigned?

Objection 1. It would seem that the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer are not fittingly assigned. It is useless to ask for that to be hallowed which is always holy. But the name of God is always holy, according to Lk. 1:49, "Holy is His name." Again, His kingdom is everlasting, according to Ps. 144:13, "Thy

kingdom is a kingdom of all ages." Again, God's will is always fulfilled, according to Isa 46:10, "All My will shall be done." Therefore it is useless to ask for "the name of God to be hallowed," for "His kingdom to come," and for "His will to be done."

Objection 2. Further, one must withdraw from evil before attaining good. Therefore it seems unfitting for the petitions relating to the attainment of good to be set forth before those relating to the removal of evil.

Objection 3. Further, one asks for a thing that it may be given to one. Now the chief gift of God is the Holy Ghost, and those gifts that we receive through Him. Therefore the petitions seem to be unfittingly assigned, since they do not correspond to the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Objection 4. Further, according to Luke, only five petitions are mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, as appears from the eleventh chapter. Therefore it was superfluous for Matthew to mention seven.

Objection 5. Further, it seems useless to seek to win the benevolence of one who forestalls us by his benevolence. Now God forestalls us by His benevolence, since "He first hath loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). Therefore it is useless to preface the petitions with the words our "Father Who art in heaven," which seem to indicate a desire to win God's benevolence.

On the contrary, The authority of Christ, who composed this prayer, suffices.

I answer that, The Lord's Prayer is most perfect, because, as Augustine says (ad Probam Ep. cxxx, 12), "if we pray rightly and fittingly, we can say nothing else but what is contained in this prayer of our Lord." For since prayer interprets our desires, as it were, before God, then alone is it right to ask for something in our prayers when it is right that we should desire it. Now in the Lord's Prayer not only do we ask for all that we may rightly desire, but also in the order wherein we ought to desire them, so that this prayer not only teaches us to ask, but also directs all our affections. Thus it is evident that the first thing to be the object of our desire is the end, and afterwards whatever is directed to the end. Now our end is God towards Whom our affections tend in two ways: first, by our willing the glory of God, secondly, by willing to enjoy His glory. The first belongs to the love whereby we love God in Himself, while the second belongs to the love whereby we love ourselves in God. Wherefore the first petition is expressed thus: "Hallowed be Thy name," and the second thus: "Thy kingdom come," by which we ask to come to the glory of His kingdom.