

EXPLANATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

FIVE QUALITIES OF PRAYER

"Our Father who art in heaven." Among all other prayers, the Lord's Prayer holds the chief place. It has five excellent qualities which are required in all prayer. A prayer must be confident, ordered, suitable, devout and humble.

It must be confident: "Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace." [1] It must not be wanting in faith, as it is said: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." [2] That this is a most trustworthy prayer is reasonable, since it was formed by Him who is our Advocate and the most wise Petitioner for us: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" [3] and of whom it is said: "For we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just one." [4] Hence, St. Cyprian says: "Since we have Christ as our Advocate with the Father for our sins, when we pray on account of our faults, we use the very words of our Advocate." [5]

Furthermore, this prayer is even more worthy of confidence in that He who taught us how to pray, graciously hears our prayer together with the Father, as it is said in the Psalm: "He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him." [6] Thus writes St. Cyprian: "It is a friendly, familiar, and devout prayer to ask of the Lord in His own words." [7] And so no one goes away from this prayer without fruit. St. Augustine says that through it our venial sins are remitted. [8]

Moreover, our prayer must be suitable, so that a person asks of God in prayer what is good for him. St. John Damascene says: "Prayer is the asking of what is right and fitting from God." [9] Many times our prayer is not heard because we seek that which is not good for us: "You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss." [10] To know, indeed, what one ought to pray for is most difficult; for it is not easy to know what one ought to desire. Those things which we rightly seek in prayer are rightly desired; hence the Apostle says: "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." [11] Christ Himself is our Teacher; it is He who teaches us what we ought to pray for, and it was to Him that the disciples said: "Lord, teach us to pray." [12] Those things, therefore, which He has taught us to pray for, we most properly ask for. "Whatsoever words we use in prayer," says St. Augustine, "we cannot but utter that which is contained in our Lord's Prayer, if we pray in a suitable and worthy manner." [13]

Our prayer ought also to be ordered as our desires should be ordered, for prayer is but the expression of desire. Now, it is the correct order that we prefer spiritual

to bodily things, and heavenly things to those merely earthly. This is according to what is written: "Seek ye first therefore the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [14] Here Our Lord shows that heavenly things must be sought first, and then things material.

Our prayer must be devout, because a rich measure of piety makes the sacrifice of prayer acceptable to God: "In Thy name I will lift up my hands. Let my soul be filled with marrow and fatness." [15] Many times because of the length of our prayers our devotion grows cool; hence Our Lord taught us to avoid wordiness in our prayers: "When you are praying, speak not much." [16] And St. Augustine says: "Let much talking be absent from prayer; but as long as fervor continues, let prayer likewise go on." [17] For this reason the Lord made His Prayer short. Devotion in prayer rises from charity which is our love of God and neighbor, both of which are evident in this prayer. Our love for God is seen in that we call God "our Father;" and our love for our neighbor when we say: "Our Father . . . forgive us our trespasses," and this leads us to love of neighbor.

Prayer ought to be humble: "He hath had regard for the prayer of the humble." [18] This is seen in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke, xviii. 9-15), and also in the words of Judith: "The prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased Thee." [19] This same humility is observed in this prayer, for true humility is had when a person does not presume upon his own powers, but from the divine strength expects all that he asks for.

It must be noted that prayer brings about three good effects. First, prayer is an efficacious and useful remedy against evils. Thus, it delivers us from the sins we have committed: "Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin. For this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee in a seasonable time." [20] The thief on the Cross prayed and received forgiveness: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." [21] Thus also prayed the Publican, and "went down to his home justified." [22] Prayer, also, frees one from the fear of future sin, and from trials and sadness of soul: "Is any one of you sad? Let him pray." [23] Again it delivers one from persecutors and enemies: "Instead of making me a return of love, they detracted me, but I gave myself to prayer." [24]

In the second place, prayer is efficacious and useful to obtain all that one desires: "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive." [25] When our prayers are not heard, either we do not persevere in prayer, whereas "we ought always to pray, and not to faint," [26] or we do not ask for that which is more conducive to our salvation. "Our good Lord often does not give us what we wish," says St. Augustine, "because it would really be what we do not wish for." St. Paul gives us an example of this in that he thrice prayed that the sting of his flesh be removed from him, and his prayer was not heard.

[27] Thirdly, prayer is profitable because it makes us friends of God: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight." [28]

ENDNOTES

1. Heb., iv. 16. 2. James, i. 6. 3. Col., ii. 3. 4. I John, ii. 1. 5. "De oratione dominica." 6. Ps. xc. 15. 7. "Ibid." 8. "Enchir., lxxviii. 9. "De fide orthodoxa," III, c. 24. 10. James, iv. 3. 11. Rom., viii. 26. 12. Luke, xi. 1. 13. "Ad Probam," Epist. cxxx. 14. Matt., vi. 33. 15. Ps. lxii. 5. 16. Matt., vi. 7. 17. "Loc. cit." 18. Ps. ci. 18. 19. Jud., ix. 16. 20. Ps. xxxi. 5. 21. Luke, xxiii. 43. 22. Ibid., xviii. 14. 23. James, v. 13. 24. Ps. xviii. 4. 25. Mark, xi. 24. 26. Luke, xviii. 1. 27. II Cor., xii. 7. 28. Ps. cxi. 2.

THE OPENING WORDS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

PREPARATION FOR THE PETITIONS

Our FATHER.--Note here two things, namely, that God is our Father, and what we owe to Him because He is our Father. God is our Father by reason of our special creation, in that He created us in His image and likeness, and did not so create all inferior creatures: "Is not He thy Father, that made thee, and created thee?" [1] Likewise God is our Father in that He governs us, yet treats us as masters, and not servants, as is the case with all other things. "For Thy providence, Father, governeth all things;" [2] and "with great favor disposest of us." [3] God is our Father also by reason of adoption. To other creatures He has given but a small gift, but to us an heredity--indeed, "if sons, heirs also." [4] "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba (Father)." [5]

We owe God, our Father, four things. First, honor: "If then I be a Father, where is My honor?" [6] Now, honor consists in three qualities. (1) It consists in giving praise to God: "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me." [7] This ought not merely come from the lips, but also from the heart, for: "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me." [8] (2) Honor, again, consists in purity of body towards oneself: "Glorify and bear God in your body." [9] (3) Honor also consists in just estimate of one's neighbor, for: "The king's honor loveth judgment." [10]

Secondly, since God is our Father, we ought to imitate Him: "Thou shalt call Me Father, and shalt not cease to walk after Me." [11] This imitation of our Father consists of three things. (1) It consists in love: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children; and walk in love." [12] This love of God must be from the

heart. (2) It consists in mercy: "Be ye merciful." [13] This mercy must likewise come from the heart, and it must be in deed. (3) Finally, imitation of God consists in being perfect, since love and mercy should be perfect: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." [14]

Thirdly, we owe God obedience: "Shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits?" [15] We must obey God for three reasons. First, because He is our Lord: "All things that the Lord has spoken we will do, we will be obedient." [16] Secondly, because He has given us the example of obedience, for the true Son of God "became obedient to His Father even unto death." [17] Thirdly, because it is for our good: "I will play before the Lord who hath chosen me." [18] Fourthly, we owe God patience when we are chastised by Him: "Reject not the correction of the Lord; and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chastises; and as a father in the son He pleaseth Himself." [19]

OUR Father.--From this we see that we owe our neighbor both love and reverence. We must love our neighbor because we are all brothers, and all men are sons of God, our Father: "For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" [20] We owe reverence to our neighbor because he is also a child of God: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why then does everyone of us despise his brother?" [21] And again: "With honor preventing one another." [22] We do this because of the fruit we receive, for "He became to all that obey the cause of eternal salvation." [23]

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

THE PREEMINENCE OF GOD

Who Art in Heaven.--Among all that is necessary for one who prays, faith is above all important: "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." [24] Hence, the Lord, teaching us to pray, first mentions that which causes faith to spring up, namely, the kindness of a father. So, He says "Our Father," in the meaning which is had in the following: "If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him!" [25] Then, He says "Who art in heaven" because of the greatness of His power: "To Thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in heaven." [26]

The words, "who art in heaven," signify three things. First, it serves as a preparation for him who utters the prayer, for, as it is said: "Before prayer prepare thy soul." [27] Thus, "in heaven" is understood for the glory of heaven:

"For your reward is very great in heaven." [28] And this preparation ought to be in the form of an imitation of heavenly things, since the son ought to imitate his Father: "Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly." [29] So also this preparation ought to be through contemplation of heavenly things, because men are wont to direct their thoughts to where they have a Father and others whom they love, as it is written: "For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." [30] The Apostle wrote: "Our conversation is in heaven." [31] Likewise, we prepare through attention to heavenly things, so that we may then seek only spiritual things from Him who is in heaven: "Seek things that are above, where Christ is." [32]

"Who art in heaven" can also pertain to Him who hears us, who is nearest to us; and then the "in heaven" is understood to mean "in devout persons" in whom God dwells, as it is written: "Thou, O Lord, art among us." [33] For holy persons are called "the heavens" in the Psalm: "The heavens show forth the glory of God," [34] since God dwells in the devout through faith. "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts." [35] God also dwells in us through love: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him." [36] And also through the keeping of the commandments: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." [37]

In the third place, "who art in heaven" can pertain to Him who is in heaven, He who cannot be included in the physical heavens, for "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." [38] And so it can mean that God is all-seeing in His survey of us, in that He sees us from above, that is, from heaven: "Because He hath looked forth from His high sanctuary; from heaven the Lord hath looked upon the earth." [39] It also signifies how sublime is God in His power: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in heaven"; [40] and that He lives without change through eternity: "But Thou, O Lord, endurest forever." [41] And again: "Thy years shall not fail." [42] And so of Christ was it written: "His throne as the days of heaven." [43]

The Philosopher says that on account of the incorruptibility of the heavens all have considered them as the abode of spirits. [44] And so "who art in heaven" tends to give us confidence in our prayer which arises from a threefold consideration: of God's power, of our familiarity with Him, and of the fitness of our requests.

The power of Him to whom we pray is implied if we consider "heaven" as the corporeal heavens. God is not limited by any physical bounds: "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." [45] Nevertheless, He is said to be in the corporeal heavens to indicate two things: the extent of His power and the greatness of His nature. The former of these attributes is contrary to the view

that all things happen out of necessity, by a fate regulated by the celestial bodies; and thus all prayer would be vain and useless. But such is absurd, since God dwells in the heavens as their Lord: "The Lord has prepared His throne in heaven." [46] The latter attribute, viz., His sublime nature, is against those who in praying propose or build up any corporeal images of God. Therefore, God is stated to be "in heaven" in that He exceeds all corporeal things, and even the desires and intellects of men; so that whatsoever man thinks or desires is far less than God. Thus, it is said: "Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge." [47] And again: "The Lord is high above all nations." [48] And finally: "To whom then have you likened God? Or what image will you make for Him?" [49]

Familiar intercourse with God is shown through this "in heaven." Some indeed have said that because of His great distance from us God does not care for men, and they cite these words: "He walketh about the poles of heaven, and He doth not consider our things." [50] Against this is the fact that God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. This brings confidence to one who prays. First, because of the nearness of God: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him." [51] Hence, it is written: "But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber," [52] that is, into thy heart. Second, because of the intercession of all the Saints among whom God dwells; for from this arises faith to ask through their merits for what we desire: "Turn to some of the Saints," [53] and, "Pray one for another, that you may be saved." [54]

This part of the prayer--that is, "in heaven"--is appropriate and fitting also, if "in heaven" is taken to mean that spiritual and eternal good in which true happiness consists. Because of it our desires are lifted up towards heavenly things; since our desires ought to tend towards where we have our Father, because there is our true home: "Seek the things that are above." [55] And again: "Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you." [56] Moreover, from it we are told that, if our life is to be in heaven, then we ought to be conformed to our Heavenly Father: "Such as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly." [57] From all this the words "in heaven" are most appropriate in prayer in that they signify both a heavenly desire and heavenly life.

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Deut., xxxii. 6. "The first word which, by the command and institution of Our Lord, we say in this prayer is 'Father.' The Saviour could, indeed, have begun this prayer with some other word more expressive of His majesty, such as 'Creator' or

'Lord.' Yet, He omitted all such expressions as they might be associated with fear, and instead of them He has chosen a word which inspires love and confidence. What name is more tender than that of Father? It is a name which expresses both indulgence and love" ("Roman Catechism," Lord's Prayer, Chapter IX, 1). 2. Wis. xiv. 3. 3. "Ibid.," xii. 18. 4. Rom., viii. 17. 5. "Ibid.," 15. 6. Mal., i. 6. 7. Ps. xxix. 13. 8. Isa., xxix. 13. 9. I Cor., vi. 20. 10. Ps. xcvi. 3. 11. Jerem., iii. 19. 12. Eph., v. 1. 13. Luke, vi. 36. 14. Matt., v. 48. 15. Heb., xii. 9. 16. Exod., xxiv. 7. 17. Phil., ii. 8. 18. II Kings, vi. 21. 19. Prov., iii. 11-12. 20. I John, iv. 20. "When we call upon the Father, invoking Him as our Father, we are to understand it as a necessary consequence of the gift and right of divine adoption and that we are all brethren, and should love one another as brothers. 'You are all brethren,' says Our Lord, 'for one is your Father, He that is in heaven' (Matt., xxiii. 8). For this reason the Apostles in their Epistles call the faithful, 'brethren'" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 14). 21. Mal., ii. 10. 22. Rom., xii. 10. 23. Heb., v. 9. 24. James, i. 6. 25. Luke, ii. 13. 26. Ps. cxxii. 1. 27. Eccclus., xviii. 23. 28. Matt., v. 12. 29. I Cor., xv. 49. 30. Matt., vi. 21. 31. Phil., iii. 20. 32. Colos., iii. 1. 33. Jerem., xiv. 9. 34. Ps. xvii. 2. 35. Eph., iii. 17. 36. I John, iv. 16. 37. John, xiv. 23. "And . . . with him" in Vives ed., omitted in Parma ed. 38. III Kings, viii. 27. 39. Ps. ci. 20. 40. Ps. cii. 19. 41. Ps. ci. 13. 42. "Ibid.," 28. 43. Ps. lxxxviii. 30. 44. Aristotle, "De Coelo," 1. 45. Jerem., xxiii. 24. 46. Ps. cii. 19. 47. Job. xxxvi. 26. 48. Ps. cxii. 4. 49. Isa., xl. 18. 50. Job, xxii. 14. 51. Ps. cxliv. 18. 52. Matt., vi. 6. 53. Job, v. 1. 54. James, v. 16. 55. Col., iii. 1. 56. I Pet., i. 4. 57. I Cor., xv. 48.

THE FIRST PETITION: "Hallowed Be Thy Name."

This is the first petition, and in it we ask that God's name be manifested and declared in us. The name of God, first of all, is wonderful because it works wonders in all creatures. Thus said Our Lord: "In My name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." [1]

GOD'S NAME IS LOVABLE

This name is lovable: "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." [2] We all should desire to be saved. We have an example in Blessed Ignatius, who had such great love for the name of Christ that, when Trajan ordered him to deny it, he affirmed that it could not be dragged from his mouth. Then, the emperor threatened to have him beheaded, and thus take the name of Christ out of the mouth of the Saint. But Ignatius replied: "Even though you take it from my mouth, you will never snatch it from my heart. I have this name written in my heart and there I never cease to invoke it." Trajan heard this and wished to put it to the test. He had the servant of God beheaded and

then commanded that his heart be taken out, and there upon the heart was found the name of Christ inscribed in letters of gold. This name had been engraved on the heart as a seal.

GOD'S NAME IS VENERABLE

The name of God is venerable: "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth." [3] "Those that are in heaven" refers to the Angels and the blessed; "those that are on earth" to people living in this world, who do so for love of heaven which they wish to gain; "those under the earth" to the damned, who do so out of fear.

GOD'S NAME IS INEFFABLE

This name is ineffable, for in the telling of it every tongue is wholly inadequate. Accordingly, it is sometimes compared to created things as, for instance, it is likened to a rock because of its firmness: "Upon this rock I will build My Church." [4] It is likened to a fire because of its purifying power; for as fire purifies metal, so does God purify the hearts of sinners: "My God is a consuming fire." [5] It is compared to light because of its power of enlightening; for as light illumines the darkness, so does the name of God overcome the darkness of the mind: "O my God, enlighten my darkness." [6]

MEANING OF HALLOWED

We pray that this name may be manifested in us, that it be known and revered as holy. Now "holy" (or hallowed) may have a threefold meaning. First, it is the same as firm. Thus, those who are firmly established in eternal happiness are all the blessed in heaven, the Saints. In this sense, none is a "Saint" on earth because here all is continually changeable. As St. Augustine says: "I sank away from Thee, O Lord, and I wandered too much astray from Thee who art my firm support." [7]

Secondly, "holy" may be understood as "unearthly." The holy ones who are in heaven have naught earthly about them: "I count (all things) . . . but as dung, that I may gain Christ." [8] Earth may signify sinners. This would arise as reference to production. For if the earth is not cultivated, it will produce thorns and thistles. Similarly, if the soul of the sinner is not cultivated by grace, it will produce only thistles and thorns of sins: "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." [9] Again, earth may signify sinners as regards its darkness. The earth is dark and opaque; and so also is the sinner dark and obstructive to light: "Darkness was on the face of the deep." [10] And, finally, earth is a dry element

which will fall to pieces unless it is mixed with the moisture of water. So God placed earth just above water: "Who established the earth above the waters." [11] So also the soul of the sinner is dry and without moisture as it is said: "My soul is as earth without water unto Thee." [12]

"Holy" may, finally, be understood as "laved in blood," since the Saints in heaven are called Saints because they have been washed in blood: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." [13] And again: "He hath washed us from our sins in His blood." [14]

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Mark, xiv. 17-18. 2. Acts. iv. 12. 3. Phil., ii. 10. 4. Matt., xvi. 18. 5. Deut., iv. 24. 6. Ps. xvii. 29. 7. "Confessions," II, x. 8. Phil., iii. 8. 9. Gen., iii. 18. 10. Gen., i. 2. 11. Ps. cxxxv. 6. 12. Ps. cxlii. 6. 13. Apoc., vii. 14. 14. "Ibid.," i. 5.

THE SECOND PETITION: "Thy Kingdom Come."

The Holy Spirit makes us love, desire and pray rightly; and instills in us, first of all, a fear whereby we ask that the name of God be sanctified. He gives us another gift, that of piety. This is a devout and loving affection for our Father and for all men who are in trouble. Now, since God is our Father, we ought not only reverence and fear Him, but also have towards Him a sweet and pious affection. This love makes us pray that the kingdom of God may come: "We should live soberly and justly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God." [1]

It may be asked of us: "Why, since the kingdom of God always was, do we then ask that it may come?" This, however, can be understood in three ways. First, a king sometimes has only the right to a kingdom or dominion, and yet his rule has not been declared because the men in his kingdom are not as yet subject to him. His rule or dominion will come only when the men of his kingdom are his subjects. Now, God is by His very essence and nature the Lord of all things; and Christ being God and Man is the Lord over all things: "And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom." [2] It is, therefore, necessary that all things be subject to Him. This is not yet the case, but will be so at the end of the world: "For He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet." [3] Hence it is for this we pray when we say: "Thy kingdom come."

WHY WE PRAY THUS

In so doing we pray for a threefold purpose: that the just may be strengthened, that sinners may be punished, and that death be destroyed. Now, the reason is that men are subject to Christ in two ways, either willingly or unwillingly. Again, the will of God is so efficacious that it must be fully complied with; and God does wish that all things be subject to Christ. Hence, two things are necessary: either man will do the will of God by subjecting himself to His commands, as do the just; or God shall exert His will and punish those who are sinners and His enemies; and this will take place at the end of the world: "Until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool." [4]

It is enjoined upon the faithful to pray that the kingdom of God may come, namely, that they subject themselves completely to Him. But it is a terrible thing for sinners, because for them to ask the coming of God's kingdom is nothing else than to ask that they be subjected to punishment: "Woe to them that desire the day of the Lord!" [5] By this prayer, too, we ask that death be destroyed. Since Christ is life, death cannot exist in His kingdom, [6] because death is the opposite of life: "And the enemy, death, shall be destroyed last." [7] "He shall cast death down headlong forever." [8] And this shall take place at the last resurrection: "Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory." [9]

In a second sense, the kingdom of heaven signifies the glory of paradise. Nor is this to be wondered at, for a kingdom ("regnum") is nothing other than a government ("regimen"). That will be the best government where nothing is found contrary to the will of the governor. Now, the will of God is the very salvation of men, for He "will have all men to be saved"; [10] and this especially shall come to pass in paradise where there will be nothing contrary to man's salvation. "They shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals." [11] In this world, however, there are many things contrary to the salvation of men. Hence, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we pray that we might participate in the heavenly kingdom and in the glory of paradise.

WHY WE DESIRE THIS KINGDOM

This kingdom is greatly to be desired for three reasons. (1) It is to be greatly desired because of the perfect justice that obtains there: "Thy people shall be all just." [12] In this world the bad are mingled with the good, but in heaven there will be no wicked and no sinners. (2) The heavenly kingdom is to be desired because of its perfect liberty. Here below there is no liberty, although all men naturally desire it; but above there will be perfect liberty without any form of oppression: "Because the creature also shall be delivered from the servitude of

corruption."[13] Not only will men then be free, but indeed they will all be kings: "And Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom."[14] This is because all shall be of one will with God, and God shall will what the Saints will, and the Saints shall will whatsoever God wills; hence, in the will of God shall their will be done All, therefore, shall reign, because the will of all shall be done, and the Lord shall be their crown: "In that day, the Lord of hosts shall be a crown of glory and a garland of joy to the residue of His people."[15] (3) The kingdom of God is to be desired because of the marvellous riches of heaven: "The eye hath not seen O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee."[16] And also: "Who satisfieth thy desire with good things."[17]

Note that man will find everything that he seeks for in this world more excellently and more perfectly in God alone. Thus, if it is pleasure you seek, then in God you will find the highest pleasure: "You shall see and your heart shall rejoice."[18] "And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."[19] If it is riches, there you will find it in abundance: "When the soul strays from Thee, she looks for things apart from Thee, but she finds all things impure and useless until she returns to Thee," says St. Augustine.[20]

Lastly, "Thy kingdom come" is understood in another sense because sometimes sin reigns in this world. This occurs when man is so disposed that he follows at once the enticement of sin. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body,"[21] but let God reign in your heart; and this will be when thou art prepared to obey God and keep all His Commandments. Therefore, when we pray to God that His kingdom may come, we pray that God and not sin may reign in us.

May we through this petition arrive at that happiness of which the Lord speaks: "Blessed are the meek!"[22] Now, according to what we have first explained above, viz., that man desires that God be the Lord of all things, then let him not avenge injuries that are done him, but let him leave that for the Lord. If you avenge yourself, you do not really desire that the kingdom of God may come. According to our second explanation (i.e., regarding the glory of paradise), if you await the coming of this kingdom which is the glory of paradise, you need not worry about losing earthly things. Likewise, if according to the third explanation, you pray that God may reign within you, then you must be humble, for He is Himself most humble: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."[23]

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Tit., ii. 12. 2. Dan., vii. 14. 3. I Cor., xv. 25. 4. Ps. cix. 1. 5. Amos, v. 18. 6. "Since . . . Kingdom" in Vives edition; not in Parma. 7. I Cor., xv. 26. 8. Isa., xxv. 8. This is in Vives edition: not in Parma. 9. Phil., iii. 21. 10. I Tim., ii. 4. 11. Matt, xiii. 41. 12. Isa., lx. 21. 13. Rom., viii, 21. 14. Apoc., v. 10. 15. Isa., xxviii. 5. 16. "Ibid.," lxiv. 4. 17. Ps. cii. 5. 18. Isa., lxvi. 14. 19. "Ibid.," xxxv. 10. These two citations in Vives edition are omitted in Parma. 20. "Confessions," II, 6. 21. Rom., vi. 12. 22. Matt., v. 4. 23. "Ibid.," xi. 29. "Finally, we pray that God alone may live, alone may reign, within us, that death no longer may exist, but may be absorbed by the victory won by Christ our Lord, who, having broken and scattered the power of all His enemies, may, in His might, subject all things to His dominion. . . . Let us, therefore, earnestly implore . . . that His commands may be observed, that there be found no traitor, no deserter, and that all may so act that they may come with joy into the presence of God their King: and may reach the possession of the heavenly kingdom prepared for them from all eternity" ("Roman Catechism." "Lord's Prayer," Chapter xi. 14, 19).

THE THIRD PETITION: "Thy Will Be Done on Earth as It Is in Heaven."

The third gift which the Holy Spirit works in us is called the gift of knowledge. The Holy Spirit not only gives us the gift of fear and the gift of piety (which is a sweet affection for God, as we have said); but He also makes man wise. It was this for which David prayed: "Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge." [1] This knowledge which the Holy Spirit teaches us is that whereby man lives justly. Among all that goes to make up knowledge and wisdom in man, the principal wisdom is that man should not depend solely upon his own opinion: "Lean not upon thy own prudence." [2] Those who put all their trust in their own judgment so that they do not trust others, but only themselves, are always found to be stupid and are so adjudged by others: "Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him." [3]

THE WILL OF GOD

Out of humility one does not trust one's own knowledge: "Where humility is there is also wisdom." [4] The proud trust only themselves. Now, the Holy Spirit, through the gift of wisdom, teaches us that we do not our own will but the will of God. It is through this gift that we pray of God that His "will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And in this is seen the gift of knowledge. Thus, one says to God "let Thy will be done," in the same way as one who is sick desires something from the physician; and his will is not precisely his own, because it is the will of the physician. Otherwise, if his desire were purely from his own will, he would be indeed foolish. So we ought not to pray other than that in us God's will may be

done; that is, that His will be accomplished in us. The heart of man is only right when it is in accord with the will of God. This did Christ: "Because I came down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him that sent Me." [5] Christ, as God, has the same will with the Father; but as a Man He has a distinct will from the Father's, and it was according to this that He says He does not do His will but the Father's. Hence, He teaches us to pray and to ask: "Thy will be done." [6]

WHAT DOES GOD WILL?

But what is this that is asked? Does not the Psalm say: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased [has willed], He hath done?" [7] Now, if He has done all that He has willed both in heaven and on earth, what then is the meaning of this: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? To understand this we must know that God wills of us three things, and we pray that these be accomplished. The first thing that God wills is that we may have eternal life. Whoever makes something for a certain purpose, has a will regarding it which is in accord with the purpose for which he made it. In like manner, God made man, but it was not for no purpose, as it is written: "Remember what my substance is; for hast Thou made all the children of men in vain?" [8]

Hence, God made men for a purpose; but this purpose was not for their mere pleasures, for also the brutes have these, but it was that they might have eternal life. The Lord, therefore, wills that men have eternal life. Now, when that for which a thing is made is accomplished, it is said to be saved; and when this is not accomplished, it is said to be lost. So when man gains eternal life, he is said to be saved, and it is this that the Lord wills: "Now, this is the will of My Father that sent Me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him may have life everlasting." [9] This will of God is already fulfilled for the Angels and for the Saints in the Fatherland, for they see God and know and enjoy Him. We, however, desire that, as the will of God is done for the blessed who are in heaven, it likewise be done for us who are on earth. For this we pray when we say "Thy will be done" for us who are on earth, as it is for the Saints who are in heaven.

THE COMMANDMENTS: GOD'S WILL

In the second place, the will of God for us is that we keep His Commandments. When a person desires something, he not only wills that which he desires, but also everything which will bring that about. Thus, in order to bring about a healthy condition which he desires, a physician also wills to put into effect diet, medicine, and other needs. We arrive at eternal life through observance of the

Commandments, and, accordingly, God wills that we observe them: "But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."[10] "Your reasonable service . . . that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God."[11] That is, good because it is profitable: "I am the Lord thy God that teach thee profitable things."[12] And acceptable, that is, pleasing: "Light is risen to the just; and joy to the right heart."[13] And perfect, because noble: "Be you therefore perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."[14] When we say "Thy will be done," we pray that we may fulfill the Commandments of God. This will of God is done by the just, but it is not yet done by sinners. "In heaven" here signifies the just; while "on earth" refers to sinners. We, therefore, pray that the will of God may be done "on earth," that is, by sinners, "as it is in heaven," that is, by the just.[15]

LET THY WILL BE DONE

It must be noted that the very words used in this petition teach us a lesson. It does not say "Do" or "Let us do," but it says, "[Let] Thy will be done," because two things are necessary for eternal life: the grace of God and the will of man. Although God has made man without man, He cannot save man without his cooperation. Thus, says St. Augustine: "Who created thee without thyself, cannot save thee without thyself,"[16] because God wills that man cooperate with Him or at least put no obstacle in His way: "Turn ye to Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you."[17] "By the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace in me hath not been void."[18] Do not, therefore, presume on your own strength, but trust in God's grace; and be not negligent, but use the zeal you have. It does not say, therefore, "Let us do," lest it would seem that the grace of God were left out; nor does it say, "Do," lest it would appear that our will and our zeal do not matter. He does say "Let it be done" through the grace of God at the same time using our desire and our own efforts.

Thirdly, the will of God in our regard is that men be restored to that state and dignity in which the first man was created. This was a condition in which the spirit and soul felt no resistance from sensuality and the flesh. As long as the soul was subject to God, the flesh was in such subjection to the spirit that no corruption of death, or weakness, or any of the passions were felt. When, however, the spirit and the soul, which were between God and the flesh, rebelled against God by sin, then the body rebelled against the soul. From that time death and weaknesses began to be felt together with continual rebellion of sensuality against the spirit: "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind."[19] "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."[20]

Thus, there is an endless strife between the flesh and the spirit, and man is

continually being brought lower by sin. The will of God, therefore, is that man be restored to his primal state so that no more would the flesh rebel against the spirit: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." [21] Now, this will of God cannot be fulfilled in this life, but it will be fulfilled in the resurrection of the just, when glorified bodies shall arise incorrupt and most perfect: "It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body." [22] In the just the will of God is fulfilled relative to the spirit, which abides in justice and knowledge and perfect life. Therefore, when we say "Thy will be done," let us pray that His will also may be done regarding the flesh. Thus, the sense of "Thy will be done on earth" is that it may be done "for our flesh," and "as it is in heaven" means in our spirit. Thus, we take "in heaven" for our spirit, and "on earth" as our flesh. [23]

By means of this petition we arrive at the happiness of those who mourn, as it is written: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." [24] This can be applied to each of the threefold explanations we have given above. According to the first we desire eternal life. And in this very desire we are brought to a mourning of soul: "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged." [25] This desire in the Saints is so vehement that because of it they wish for death, which in itself is something naturally to be avoided: "But we are confident and have a good will to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord." [26] Likewise, according to our second explanation--viz., that we will to keep the Commandments --they who do so are in sorrow. For although such be sweet for the soul, it is bitter indeed for the flesh which is continually kept in discipline. "Going, they went and wept," which refers to the flesh, "But coming, they shall come with joyfulness," which pertains to the soul. [27] Again, from our third explanation (that is, concerning the struggle which is ever going on between the flesh and the spirit), we see that this too causes sorrow. For it cannot but happen that the soul be wounded by the venial faults of the flesh; and so in expiating for these the soul is in mourning. "Every night," that is, the darkness of sin, "I will wash my bed [that is, my conscience] with my tears." [28] Those who thus sorrow will arrive at the Fatherland, where may God bring us also!

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Ps. cxviii. 66. 2. Prov. iii. 5. 3. "Ibid.," xxvi. 12. 4. "Ibid.," xi. 2. 5. John, vi. 38. 6. "Now, this is what we implore when we address these words to God: 'Thy will be done.' We have fallen into this state of misery by disobeying and despising the divine will. Now, God deigns to propose to us, as the sole corrective of all our evils, a conformity to His will which by our sins we despised. He commands us to regulate all our thoughts and actions by this standard. And to be able to accomplish this is our aim when we humbly say this prayer to God: 'Thy will be

done' " ("Roman Catechism," "Lord's Prayer," Chapter xli, 8). 7. Ps. clxxiv. 6. 8. Ps. lxxxviii. 48. 9. John, vi. 10. 10. Matt., xix. 17. 11. Rom., xii. 1-2. 12. Isa., xlviii. 11. 13. Ps. xcvi. 11. 14. Matt., v. 48. 15. "When, therefore, we pray, 'Thy will be done,' we first of all ask our Heavenly Father to enable us to obey His divine commands, and to serve Him all the days of our lives in holiness and justice. Likewise that we do all things in accord with His will and pleasure, that we perform all the duties prescribed for us in the sacred writings and thus, guided and assisted by Him, so conduct ourselves in all things as becomes those 'who are born, not of the will of flesh but of God' " ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 12). 16. "Super Verbum Apost.," XV. 17. Zach., i. 3. 18. I Cor., xv. 10. 19. Rom., vii. 23. 20. Gal., v. 17. 21. Thess., iv. 3. 22. I Cor., xv. 44. 23. "When we say, 'Thy will be done,' we expressly detest the works of the flesh, of which the Apostle writes: 'The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, lust, etc.' (Gal., v. 19); 'if you live according to the flesh you shall die' (Rom. viii. 13). We also pray God not to permit us to yield to the suggestions of sensual appetite, of our lusts, of our infirmities, but to govern our will by His will" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 14). 24. Matt., v. 5. 25. Ps. cxix. 5. 26. II Cor., v. 8. 27. Ps. cxxv. 6. 28. Ps. vi. 7.

THE FOURTH PETITION THE FOURTH PETITION "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread."

Sometimes it happens that one of great learning and wisdom becomes fearful and timid; and, therefore, it is necessary that he have fortitude of heart lest he lack necessities: "It is He that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not." [1] The Holy Spirit gives this fortitude: "And the Spirit entered into me, . . . and He set me upon my feet." [2] This fortitude which is given by the Holy Ghost so strengthens the heart of man that he does not fear for the things that are necessary for him, but he trusts that God will provide for all his needs. The Holy Spirit who gives us this strength teaches us to pray to God: "Give us this day our daily bread." And thus He is called the Spirit of fortitude.

It must be noted that in the first three petitions of this prayer only things spiritual are asked for--those which indeed begin to be in this world but are only brought to fruition in the life eternal. Thus, when we pray that the name of God be hallowed, we really ask that the name of God be known; when we pray that the kingdom of God may come, we ask that we may participate in God's kingdom; and when we pray that the will of God be done, we ask that His will be accomplished in us. All these things, however, although they have their beginning here on earth, cannot be had in their fullness except in heaven. Hence, it is necessary to pray for certain necessities which can be completely had in this life.

The Holy Spirit, then, taught us to ask for the requirements of this present life which are here obtainable in their fullness, and at the same time He shows that our temporal wants are provided us by God. It is this that is meant when we say: "Give us this day our daily bread." [3]

In these very words the Holy Spirit teaches us to avoid five sins which are usually committed out of the desire for temporal things. The first sin is that man, because of an inordinate desire, seeks those things which go beyond his state and condition of life. He is not satisfied with what befits him. Thus, if he be a soldier and desires clothes, he will not have them suitable for a soldier, but rather for a knight; or if he be a cleric, clothes fit for a bishop. This vicious habit withdraws man from spiritual things, in that it makes his desires cleave to transitory things. The Lord taught us to avoid this vice by instructing us to ask for the temporal necessities of this present life as they are in accord with the position of each one of us. All this is understood under the name of "bread." And so He does not teach us to pray for that which is luxurious, nor for variety, nor for what is over-refined, but for bread which is common to all and without which man's life could not be sustained: "The chief thing for man's life is water and bread." [4] And: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." [5]

The second sin is that some in acquiring temporal goods burden others and defraud them. This vicious practice is dangerous, because goods thus taken away can be restored only with difficulty. For, as St. Augustine says: "The sin is not forgiven until that which is taken away is restored." [6] "They eat the bread of wickedness." [7] The Lord teaches us to avoid this sin, and to pray for our own bread, not that of another. Robbers do not eat their own bread, but the bread of their neighbor.

The third sin is unnecessary solicitude. There are some who are never content with what they have, but always want more. This is wholly immoderate, because one's desire must always be measured by his need: "Give me neither beggary nor riches, but give me only the necessities of life." [8] We are taught to avoid this sin in the words, "our daily bread," that is, bread of one day or for one time. [9]

The fourth sin is inordinate voracity. There are those who in one day would consume what would be enough for many days. Such pray not for bread for one day, but for ten days. And because they spend too much, it happens what they spend all their substance. "They that give themselves to drinking and that club together shall be consumed." [10] And: "A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich." [11]

The fifth sin is ingratitude. A person grows proud in his riches, and does not

realize that what he has comes from God. This is a grave fault, for all things that we have, be they spiritual or temporal, are from God: "All things are Thine; and we have given Thee what we received of Thy hand." [12] Therefore, to take away this vice, the prayer has, "Give us" even "our daily bread," that we may know that all things come from God.

From all this we draw one great lesson. Sometimes one who has great riches makes no use of them, but suffers spiritual and temporal harm; for some because of riches have perished. "There is also another evil which I have seen under the sun, and that frequent among men. A man to whom God hath given riches and substance and honor, and his soul wanteth nothing of all that he desireth; yet God doth not give him power to eat thereof, but a stranger shall eat it up." [13] And again: "Riches kept to the hurt of the owner." [14] We ought, therefore, pray that our riches will be of use to us; and it is this we seek for when we say, "Give us our bread," that is, make our riches be of use to us. "His bread in his belly shall be turned into the gall of asps within him. The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up; and God shall draw them out of his belly." [15]

Another great vice is concerned with the things of this world, viz., excessive solicitude for them. For there are some who daily are anxious about temporal goods which are enough for them for an entire year; and they who are thus troubled will never have rest: "Be not solicitous therefore, saying: "What shall we eat, or What shall we drink, or Wherewith shall we be clothed?" [16] The Lord, therefore, teaches us to pray that to-day our bread will be given us, that is, those things which will be needful for us for the present time.

One may also see in this bread another twofold meaning, viz., Sacramental Bread and the Bread of the Word of God. Thus, in the first meaning, we pray for our Sacramental Bread which is consecrated daily in the Church, so that we receive it in the Sacrament, and thus it profits us unto salvation: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." [17] And: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." [18]

In the second meaning this bread is the Word of God: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." [19] We pray, therefore, that He give us bread, that is, His Word. [20] From this man derives that happiness which is a hunger for justice. For after spiritual things are considered, they are all the more desired; and this desire arouses a hunger, and from this hunger follows the fullness of life everlasting.

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Isa., xl. 29. 2. Ezech., ii. 2. 3. "The fourth and following petitions, in which we particularly and expressly pray for the necessary wants of soul and body, are subordinate to those which have preceded. According to the order of the Lord's Prayer, we ask for what regards the body and its preservation only after we have prayed for the things that pertain to God" ("Roman Catechism," "Lord's Prayer," Chapter xiii, 1). 4. Ecclus., xxix. 27. 5. I Tim., vi. 8. "We also ask 'our daily bread,' that is, necessary sustenance, and under the name of bread we understand whatever is necessary for food and raiment. . . . To comprehend fully the meaning of this petition, it is also to be noted that by this word 'bread' ought not to be understood an abundance of exquisite food and of rich clothing, but what is necessary and simple" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 10). 6. "Epistle" cliii, in Migne, P.L., XXXIII, 662. 7. Prov., iv. 17. 8. "Ibid.," xxx. 8. 9. "We also call it 'our daily bread,' because we use it to regain the vital energy that is daily consumed. . . . Finally, the word 'daily' implies the necessity of continually praying to God. in order to be kept in the habit of loving and serving Him, and that we may be thoroughly convinced of the fact that upon Him we depend for life and salvation" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 12). 10. Prov., xxiii. 21. 11. Ecclus., xix. 1. 12. I Paral., xxix. 14. 13. Eccles., vi. 1-2. 14. "Ibid., v. 12. 15. Job. xx. 14-15 16. Matt., vi. 31. 17. John, vi. 51. 18. I Cor., xi. 29. "But Christ our Lord, substantially present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, is preeminently this bread. This ineffable pledge of His love He gave us when about to return to His Father, and of it He said: 'He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him' (John, vi. 57). 'Take ye and eat: this is My body' (Matt., xxvi. 26). . . . This Bread is called 'our bread.' because it is the spiritual food of the faithful only, that is, of those who, uniting charity to faith, wash away sin from their souls in the Sacrament of Penance, and mindful that they are the children of God, receive and adore this divine mystery with all the holiness and veneration to which they can arouse themselves" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 20). 19. Matt., iv. 4. 20. "It remains to speak of that spiritual bread which also is the object of this petition of the Lord's Prayer, which takes in everything that is necessary for the health and safety of the spirit and soul. Just as the food by which the body is nourished is of various sorts, so is the food which preserves the life of the spirit and soul not of one kind. Thus, the word of God is the food of the soul" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 18).

THE FIFTH PETITION: "And Forgive Us Our Trespases As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us."

There are some men of great wisdom and fortitude who, because they trust too much in their own strength, do not wisely carry out what they attempt, and they

do not bring to completion that which they have in mind. "Designs are strengthened by counsels." [1] It must be known that the Holy Ghost who gives fortitude also gives counsel. Every good counsel concerning the salvation of man is from the Holy Ghost. Thus, counsel is necessary for man when he is in difficulty, just as is the counsel of physicians when one is ill. When man falls into spiritual illness through sin, he must look for counsel in order to be healed. This necessity for counsel on the part of the sinner is shown in these words: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms." [2] The best counsel, therefore, against sin is alms and mercy. Hence, the Holy Spirit teaches sinners to seek and to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses." [3]

We owe God that which we have taken away from His sole right; and this right of God is that we do His will in preference to our own will. Now, we take away from God's right when we prefer our will to God's will, and this is a sin. Sins, therefore, are our trespasses. [4] And it is the counsel of the Holy Spirit that we ask God pardon for our sins, and so we say: "Forgive us our trespasses."

We can consider these words in three ways: (1) Why do we make this petition? (2) How may it be fulfilled? (3) What is required on our part?

WHY DO WE MAKE THIS PETITION?

It must be known that from this petition we can draw two things that are necessary for us in this life. One is that we be ever in a state of salutary fear and humility. There have been some, indeed, so presumptuous as to say that man could live in this world and by his own unaided strength avoid sin. But this condition has been given to no one except Christ, who had the Spirit beyond all measure, and to the Blessed Virgin, who was full of grace and in whom there was no sin. "And concerning whom," that is, the Virgin, "when it is a question of sin I wish to make no mention," says St. Augustine. [5] But for all the other Saints, it was never granted them that they should not incur at least venial sin: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." [6] And, moreover, this very petition proves this; for it is evident that all Saints and all men say the "Our Father" in which is contained "Forgive us our trespasses." Hence, all admit and confess that they are sinners or trespassers. If, therefore, you are a sinner, you ought to fear and humble yourself.

Another reason for this petition is that we should ever live in hope. Although we be sinners, nevertheless we must not give up hope, lest our despair drive us into greater and different kinds of sins. As the Apostle says: "Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness." [7] It

is, therefore, of great help that we be ever hopeful; for in the measure that man is a sinner, he ought to hope that God will forgive him if he be perfectly sorry for sin and be converted. This hope is strengthened in us when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses."

The Novatiani destroyed this hope, saying that one who has sinned but once after Baptism can never look for mercy. But this is not true, if Christ spoke truly when He said: "I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest Me." [8] In whatsoever day, therefore, you ask, you can receive mercy if with sorrow for sin you make your prayer. Both fear and hope arise from this petition. For all sinners who are contrite and confess their guilt, receive mercy. Hence, this petition is necessary.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS PETITION

Concerning the second consideration of this petition (viz., how it may be fulfilled), it must be known that there are two factors in sin: the fault by which God is offended, and the punishment which is due because of this fault. But the sin is taken away in contrition which goes with the purpose to confess and make satisfaction: "I said: I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord. And Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin" [9] One has no need to fear then, because for the remission of a fault contrition with a purpose to confess is sufficient. [10]

But one might say: "If sin is thus taken away when a man is contrite, of what necessity is the priest?" To this it must be said that God does forgive the sin in contrition, and eternal punishment is changed to temporal, but nevertheless the debt of temporal punishment remains. If one should die without confession, not out of contempt for it but prevented from it, one would go to purgatory, where the punishment, as St. Augustine says, is very great. When you confess, the priest absolves you of this punishment in virtue of the keys to which you subject yourself in confession. [11] When, therefore, one has confessed, something of this punishment is taken away; and similarly when he has again confessed, and it could be that after he has confessed many times, all would be remitted.

The successors of the Apostles found another mode of remission of this punishment, namely, the good use of indulgences, which have their force for one living in the state of grace, to the extent that is claimed for them and as indicated by the grantor. That the Pope can bring this about, is sufficiently evident. Many holy men have accomplished much good, and they have not greatly sinned, at least not mortally; and these good deeds were done for the common use of the Church. Likewise the merits of Christ and the Blessed Virgin are, as it were, in a

treasury; and from it the Supreme Pontiff and they who are by him permitted can dispense these merits where it is necessary. Thus, therefore, sins are taken away not only as regards their guilt by contrition,[12] but also as regards punishment for them in confession and through indulgences.[13]

WHAT MUST WE DO?

Concerning the third consideration of this petition, it must be known that on our part we are required to forgive our neighbor the offenses which he commits against us. Thus, we say: "As we forgive those who trespass against us." Otherwise God would not forgive us: "Man to man reserveth anger: and doth he seek remedy of God?"[14] "Forgive and you shall be forgiven." [15] Therefore, only in this petition is there a condition when it says: "As we forgive those who trespass against us." If you do not forgive, you shall not be forgiven.

But you may think, "I shall say what goes first in the petition, namely, 'forgive us,' but that 'As we forgive those who trespass against us,' I shall not say." Would you seek to deceive Christ? You certainly do not deceive Him. For Christ who made this prayer remembers it well, and cannot be deceived. If therefore, you say it with the lips, let the heart fulfill it.

But one may ask whether he who does not intend to forgive his neighbor ought to say: "As we forgive those who trespass against us." It seems not, for such is a lie. But actually it must be said that he does not lie, because he prays not in his own person, but in that of the Church which is not deceived, and, therefore the petition itself is in the plural number.[16] And it must also be known that forgiveness is twofold. One applies to the perfect, where the one offended seeks out the offender: "Seek after peace." [17] The other is common to all, and to it all are equally bound, that one offended grant pardon to the one who seeks it: "Forgive thy neighbor if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest." [18] And from this follows that other beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful." For mercy causes us to have pity on our neighbor.

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Prov., xx. 18. 2. Dan., iv. 24. 3. "In this petition we find a new manner of prayer. In the other petitions we asked of God not only eternal and spiritual goods, but also transient and temporal advantages. But now we ask to be liberated from the evils of the soul and of the body. of this life and of the life to come" ("Roman Catechism," "Lord's Prayer," Chapter XIV, 1). 4. Literally, our

debts; that is, the difference between what we ought to give God and actually do not give Him. "The type of offense requiring expiation, a sin" (Oxford English Dictionary). What we pray for is that God may deliver us from sin This is the interpretation of St. Luke, who, instead of 'debts,' uses the word 'sins, because through our sins we become guilty before God and incur a debt of punishment which we must pay either by satisfaction or by suffering. . . . With regard to serious sins, however, this petition cannot procure forgiveness unless it derive that efficacy from the Sacrament of Penance, received, as we have already said, either actually or at least in desire' (Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 15). 5. "De Natura et gratia," XXXVI. 6. I John, i. 8. 7. Eph., iv. 19. 8. Matt., xviii. 32. 9. Ps. xxxi. 5. 10. See Editor's Note in English Translation of "Summa Theologica Supplement," Q. xviii, art. 1, which says: "St. Thomas here follows the opinion of Peter Lombard. . . . Later in life he altered his opinion. Cfr. P. III, Q. lxxvii, art. 1; Q. lxxviii, art. 1; Q. lxxxvi. art. 6." See footnote below. 11. The effects of the Sacrament of Penance are: (1) sanctifying grace is imparted whereby the guilt of mortal sin is taken away and at the same time the guilt of eternal punishment; (2) the guilt of temporal punishment is more or less remitted according to the dispositions of the penitent "and the disposition can be such that in virtue of contrition the entire punishment is removed," says St. Thomas (IV Sent., Dist. xviii, art. 3, sol. 2, ad. 4). The Council of Trent (Session XIV, cap. 2) teaches that this entire remission of punishment, which is obtained through Baptism, is not obtained through the Sacrament of Penance "without much tears and labors" ("magnis nostris fletibus et laboribus"). For other effects of this Sacrament, such as the bestowal of sacramental grace and the revival of the merits of former good works, see the Manuals of Moral Theology (e.g., Aertnys-Damen, II, lib. VI, tract. v, n. 272). 12. See footnote above. 13. An indulgence is a remission of that temporal punishment which, even after the sin is forgiven, we have yet to undergo either here or in purgatory. Indulgences derive their value and efficacy from the spiritual treasury of the Church. which consists of the superabundant merits of Christ, His Blessed Mother. and the Saints. This treasury is to be considered as the common property of the faithful, committed to the administration of the Church. In virtue of the Communion of Saints, by which we are united as members of one body, the abundance of some supplies for the want of others. The Council of Trent (Session XXV) points out to all the faithful that the use of indulgences is very salutary. 14. Eccclus., xxviii. 3. 15. Luke, vi. 37. 16. "Nor do we say 'forgive me,' but 'forgive us,' because the brotherly relationship and charity which subsist between all men demand of each of us that, being solicitous for the salvation of our neighbor, we pray also for them while offering prayers for ourselves" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," 16). 17. Ps. xxxiii. 15. 18. Eccclus., xxviii. 2.

THE SIXTH PETITION: "And Lead Us Not Into Temptation."

There are those who have sinned and desire forgiveness for their sins. They confess their sins and repent. Yet, they do not strive as much as they should in order that they may not fall into sin again. In this indeed they are not consistent. For, on the one hand, they deplore their sins by being sorry for them; and, on the other hand, they sin again and again and have them again to deplore. Thus it is written: "Wash yourselves, be clean. Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely."[1]

We have seen in the petition above that Christ taught us to seek forgiveness for our sins. In this petition, He teaches us to pray that we might avoid sin--that is, that we may not be led into temptation, and thus fall into sin. "And lead us not into temptation."[2]

Three questions are now considered: (1) What is temptation? (2) In what ways is one tempted and by whom? (3) How is one freed from temptation?

WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

Regarding the first, it must be known that to tempt is nothing other than to test or to prove. To tempt a man is to test or try his virtue. This is done in two ways just as a man's virtue requires two things. One requirement is to do good, the other is to avoid evil: "Turn away from evil and do good."[3] Sometimes a man's virtue is tried in doing good, and sometimes it is tested in avoiding evil. Thus, regarding the first, a person is tried in his readiness to do good, for example, to fast and such like. Then is thy virtue great when thou art quick to do good. In this way does God sometimes try one's virtue, not, however, because such virtue is hidden from Him, but in order that all might know it and it would be an example to all. God tempted Abraham in this way, and Job also.[4] For this reason God frequently sends trials to the just, who in sustaining them with all patience make manifest their virtue and themselves increase in virtue: "The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, or not."[5] Thus does God tempt man by inciting him to good deeds.

As to the second, the virtue of man is tried by solicitation to evil. If he truly resists and does not give his consent, then his virtue is great. If, however, he falls before the temptation, he is devoid of virtue. God tempts no man in this way, for it is written: "God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man."[6]

HOW IS ONE TEMPTED?

The Temptations of the Flesh.--Man is tempted by his own flesh, by the devil and

by the world. He is tempted by the flesh in two ways. First, the flesh incites one to evil. It always seeks its own pleasures, namely, carnal pleasures, in which often is sin. He who indulges in carnal pleasures neglects spiritual things: "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence." [7]

Secondly, the flesh tempts man by enticing him away from good. For the spirit on its part would delight always in spiritual things, but the flesh asserting itself puts obstacles in the way of the spirit: "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul." [8] "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." [9] This temptation which comes from the flesh is most severe, because our enemy, the flesh, is united to us; and as Boethius says: "There is no plague more dangerous than an enemy in the family circle." We must, therefore, be ever on our guard against this enemy: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." [10]

The Temptations of the Devil.--The devil tempts us with extreme force. Even when the flesh is subdued, another tempter arises, namely, the devil against whom we have a heavy struggle. Of this the Apostle says: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places." [11] For this reason he is very aptly called the tempter: "Lest perhaps he that tempteth should have tempted you." [12]

The devil proceeds most cunningly in tempting us. He operates like a skillful general when about to attack a fortified city. He looks for the weak places in the object of his assault, and in that part where a man is most weak, he tempts him. He tempts man in those sins to which, after subduing his flesh, he is most inclined. Such, for instance, are anger, pride and the other spiritual sins. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." [13]

How the Devil Tempts Us.--The devil does two things when he tempts us. Thus, he does not at once suggest something that appears to us as evil, but something that has a semblance of good. Thereby he would, at least in the beginning, turn a man from his chief purpose, and then afterwards it will be easier to induce him to sin, once he has been turned away ever so little. "Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light." [14] Then when he has once led man into sin, he so enchains him as to prevent his rising up out of his sin. The devil, therefore, does two things: he deceives a man first, and then after betraying him, enthralls him in his sin.

Temptations of the World.--The world has two ways of tempting man. The first is excessive and intemperate desire for the goods of this life: "The desire of money is the root of all evil." [15] The second way is the fears engendered by persecutors and tyrants: "We are wrapped up in darkness." [16] "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [17] And again: "Fear not those that slay the body." [18]

How Is One Freed from Temptation?--Now we have seen what temptation is, and also in what way and by whom one is tempted. But how is one freed from temptation? In this we must notice that Christ teaches us to pray, not that we may not be tempted, but that we may not be led into temptation. For it is when one overcomes temptation that one deserves the reward. Thus it is said: "Count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations." [19] And again: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, . . . prepare thy soul for temptation." [20] Again: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life." [21] Our Lord, therefore, teaches us to pray that we be not led into temptation, by giving our consent to it: "Let no temptation take hold on you, but such as is human." [22] The reason is that it is human to be tempted, but to give consent is devilish.

But does God lead one to evil, that he should pray: "Lead us not into temptation"? I reply that God is said to lead a person into evil by permitting him to the extent that, because of his many sins, He withdraws His grace from man, and as a result of this withdrawal man does fall into sin. Therefore, we sing in the Psalm: "When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me." [23] God, however, directs man by the fervor of charity that he be not led into temptation. For charity even in its smallest degree is able to resist any kind of sin: "Many waters cannot quench charity." [24] He also guides man by the light of his intellect in which he teaches him what he should do. For as the Philosopher says: "Every one who sins is ignorant." [25] "I will give thee understanding and I will instruct thee." [26] It was for this last that David prayed, saying: "Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death; lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed against him." [27] We have this through the gift of understanding. Therefore, when we refuse to consent to temptation, we keep our hearts pure: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." [28] And it follows from this petition that we are led up to the sight of God, and to it may God lead us all!

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. Isa., i. 16.
2. "We should implore the divine assistance in general under all

temptations, and especially when we are assailed by any particular temptation" ("Roman Catechism," "Lord's Prayer," Chapter XV, 15). 3. Ps. xxxiii. 15. 4. Gen., xxii: Job, i. 5. Deut., xiii. 3. 6. James, i. 13. 7. "Ibid.," i. 14. 8. Wis., ix. 15. 9. Rom., vii. 22-23. 10. Matt., xxvi. 41. 11. Eph., vi. 12. 12. I Thess., iii. 5. 13. I Peter, v. 8. 14. Cor., xi. 14. 15. Tim., vi. 10. 16. Job, xxxvii. 19. 17. II Tim., iii. 12. 18. Matt., x. 28. 19. James, i. 2. 20. Ecclus. ii. 1. 21. James., 12. 22. I Cor., x. 13. 23. Ps. lxx. 9. 24. Cant., viii. 7. 25. Aristotle, "Ethics." III, 1. 26. Ps. xxxi. 8. 27. Ps. xii. 4-5. 28. Matt., v. 8.

SEVENTH PETITION: "But Deliver Us from Evil. Amen."

The Lord has already taught us to pray for forgiveness of our sins, and how to avoid temptations. In this petition, He teaches us to pray to be preserved from evil, and indeed from all evil in general, such as sin, illness, affliction and all others, as St. Augustine explains it.[1] But since we have already mentioned sin and temptation, we now must consider other evils, such as adversity and all afflictions of this world. From these God preserves us in a fourfold manner.

First, He preserves us from affliction itself; but this is very rare because it is the lot of the just in this world to suffer, for it is written: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [2] Once in a while, however, God does prevent a man from being afflicted by some evil; this is when He knows such a one to be weak and unable to bear it. Just so a physician does not prescribe violent medicines to a weak patient. "Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut; because thou hast little strength." [3] In heaven this will be a general thing, for there no one shall be afflicted. "In six troubles," those, namely, of this present life which is divided into six periods, "He shall deliver thee, and in the seventh evil shall not touch thee." [4] "They shall no more hunger nor thirst." [5]

Second, God delivers us from afflictions when He consoles us in them; for unless He console us, we could not long persevere: "We were pressed out of measure above our strength so that we were weary even of life." [6] "But God, who comforteth the humble, comforted us." [7] "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul." [8]

Third, God bestows so many good things upon those who are afflicted that their evils are forgotten: "After the storm Thou makest a calm." [9] The afflictions and trials of this world, therefore, are not to be feared, both because consolations accompany them and because they are of short duration: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." [10]

Fourth, we are preserved from afflictions in this way that all temptations and trials are conducive to our own good. We do not pray, "Deliver us from tribulation," but "from evil." This is because tribulations bring a crown to the just, and for that reason the Saints rejoiced in their sufferings: "We glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." [11] "In time of tribulation Thou forgivest sins." [12]

THE VALUE OF PATIENCE

God, therefore, delivers man from evil and from affliction by converting them to his good. This is a sign of supreme wisdom to divert evil to good. And patience in bearing trials is a result of this. The other virtues operate by good things, but patience operates in evil things, and, indeed, it is very necessary in evil things, namely, in adversity: "The learning of a man is known by his patience." [13]

The Holy Spirit through the gift of wisdom has us use this prayer, and by it we arrive at supreme happiness which is the reward of peace. For it is by patience we obtain peace, whether in time of prosperity or of adversity. For this reason the peace-makers are called the children of God, because they are like to God in this, that nothing can hurt God and nothing can hurt them, whether it be prosperity or adversity: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." [14]

"Amen." This is general ratification of all the petitions. [15]

A SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE WHOLE PRAYER

By way of brief summary, it should be known that the Lord's Prayer contains all that we ought to desire and all that we ought to avoid. Now, of all desirable things, that must be most desired which is most loved, and that is God.

Therefore, you seek, first of all, the glory of God when you say: "Hallowed be Thy name." You should desire three things from God, and they concern yourself. The first is that you may arrive at eternal life. And you pray for this when you say: "Thy kingdom come." The second is that you will do the will of God and His justice. You pray for this in the words: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The third is that you may have the necessities of life. And thus you pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." Concerning all these things the Lord says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," which complies with the second, "and all these things shall be added unto you," [16] as in accord with the third.

We must avoid and flee from all things which are opposed to the good. For, as we have seen, good is above all things to be desired. This good is fourfold. First, there is the glory of God, and no evil is contrary to this: "If thou sin, what shalt thou hurt Him? And if thou do justly, what shall thou give Him?"[17] Whether it be the evil inasmuch as God punishes it, or whether it be the good in that God rewards it--all redound to His glory.

The second good is eternal life, to which sin is contrary: because eternal life is lost by sin. And so to remove this evil we pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The third good is justice and good works, and temptation is contrary to this, because temptation hinders us from doing good. We pray, therefore, to have this evil taken away in the words: "Lead us not into temptation." The fourth good is all the necessities of life, and opposed to this are troubles and adversities. And we seek to remove them when we pray: "But deliver us from evil. Amen."

(For "Questions for Discussion" see Chapter 6.)

ENDNOTES

1. "Our Lord Himself made use of this petition when on the eve of His passion He prayed to God His Father for the salvation of all mankind. He said, 'I pray that Thou keep them from evil' (John, xvii. 15). In this form of prayer He, as it were, summarized the force and efficacy of the other petitions; and He delivered it by way of precept and confirmed it by example" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," Chapter XVI, 1). 2. II Tim., iii. 12. 3. Apoc., iii. 8. 4. Job, v. 19. 5. Apoc., vii. 16. 6. II Cor., i. 8. 7. "Ibid.," vii. 6. 8. Ps. xciii. 19. 9. Tob., iii. 22. 10. II Cor., iv. 17. 11. Rom., v. 3. 12. Tob., iii. 13. 13. Prov., xix. 11. 14. Matt., v. 9. 15. 'The word 'Amen' which brings the Lord's Prayer to a close contains, as it were, the germs of many of those thoughts and considerations which we have just treated. Indeed, so frequent was this Hebrew word in the mouth of Our Lord that it pleased the Holy Spirit to have it retained in the Church of God. The meaning of it may be said to be: 'Know that thy prayers are heard.' It has the force of a response, as if God answers the prayer of the suppliant and graciously dismisses him after He has kindly heard his prayers" ("Roman Catechism," "loc. cit.," Chapter xvii. 4). 16. Matt., vi. 33. 17. Job, xxxv. 6, 7.