



Learn to Pray by Praying

By Dom Hubert Van Zeller, OSB

To the saints, the problem of living reduced itself to the following: praying and forgetting self. "Of course," you may say, "we all know that. But isn't the real question how to pray and how to forget self?" No, not immediately. The first thing you have to do is set yourself to pray. Do the thing. Then you will learn, as you go along, how it is done.

Then you will learn, if you are faithful in the exercise of it, to forget self. Start off by wanting to pray. Start off by deciding to pray — always. You will be taught the rest.

If you do not pray, everything can disappoint you by going wrong. If you do pray, everything can still go wrong, but not in a way that will disappoint you. So the more you pray, the less things can disappoint you, because their going wrong or not going wrong is, to you, now, not the whole story. By praying, you have got yourself into the position of being able to draw success out of failure. You now know that you are praying not for success, but for the glory of God. And God's glory can be served just as well in failure as in success.

But it is even simpler than that. Pray, and do not think of failure or success. You cannot measure either of them anyway, so why bother? Disappointment need not enter into your calculations at all. You have not the least idea what will be the outcome of your prayer — except that certainly it will be pleasing to God. None of the other effects

matters. If you really grasp this fact and do not try to go back on your prayer, you are *forgetting self*.

On the other hand, do not pray, and your judgment, already weakened by the effects of Original Sin, is blinded by material values. Moral principles are only half seen

by people who do not pray. Not only is the judgment, without prayer to help it, likely to make many more false decisions, but without prayer to teach it the doctrine of drawing success from failure, it is also likely to misread the consequences of its decisions. Give up prayer, and you no longer see the inwardness of things; you see only the surface. And with nothing to go by but effects, statistics, and evidence supplied by natural perceptions, you arrive at the wrong conclusions.

Prayer is not merely a means supplied by God of making our lives run more smoothly. The first purpose of prayer is a means supplied by God of making our love explicit. Nevertheless prayer is an answer to life on earth. Indeed it is *the* answer. This is, after all, what we would expect if we accept Our Lord's words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you." (*Matt. 6:33*). In proportion as you draw near to Truth by prayer, you inevitably increase your own conformity to the true pattern of yourself as it exists in the mind of God. And this means that, whatever it feels like, your life is going right. †



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The Veneration of Images

By Father Bertrand Conway

Note: In Our Lady's request for the Five First Saturdays of Reparation, one of the five blasphemies for which Jesus asks us to make reparation is the "offenses of those who outrage Her directly in Her holy images." Some of the hostility towards Catholic images comes from a Protestantism that misunderstands the Old Testament. Due to their confusion, they claim that Catholics "adore" statues of Our Lady and the Saints, and that Christians should make no holy images at all. We here present a brief explanation of the Catholic doctrine regarding the veneration of images.

Catholics do not adore images or pray to them. The Council of Trent says: "The images of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and to be kept especially in churches, and due honor and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped, or that anything is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be reposed in images, as was done of old by the Gentiles, who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which these images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ, and we venerate the saints whose likeness they bear" (Sess. xxv.).

This merely repeats the teaching of the Second Council of Nice in 787, which condemned the Eastern Iconoclasts, who held that reverence paid to images was a work of the devil and a new form of idolatry.

Even if we grant that God forbade the making of all images to the Jews, such a law would not bind Christians, as the positive Jewish law was abrogated by the Gospel (*Rom. 8: 1, 2; Gal. 3: 23-25*). There is certainly no inherent wickedness in making such an image. The eternal law can never be abrogated; it will always be sinful "to adore them and serve



A beautiful altar adorned with images of the Saints

them." We know that the Jews did not understand the command as an absolute prohibition of images, for we find a number of them in the Temple. There were, for example, the brazen serpent in *Numbers 21* (commanded to be made by God); the golden cherubim (*Exod. 25: 13; Ezech. 1: 5; 10: 20; 3 Kings 6: 23*), the carved garlands of flowers, fruit and trees (*Numbers 8: 4; 3 Kings 6: 18; 7: 36*), the carved lions which supported the basins and the King's throne (*3 Kings 7: 24; 10: 19, 20*), and the ephod (*Judges 8: 27; 1 Kings 19: 13*). The Jews of the dispersion, despite their bitter hatred of idolatry, decorated their cemeteries with paintings of birds, beasts, fishes, men and women.

The early Christians adorned their Catacombs with many frescoes of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, which recalled incidents in the Sacred Scriptures. The most common paintings were Moses striking the rock, Noe in the ark, Daniel in the lion's den, the Nativity, the Coming of the Wise Men, the marriage feast of Cana, the raising of Lazarus, and Christ the Good Shepherd. Statues were rare only because they were costly and difficult to make. When the Church came up from the Catacombs, she began to decorate her churches with costly mosaics, carvings, paintings and statues. No one can honestly accuse these early Christians of idolatry, for they died in protest against it by the thousands, and wrote treatise after treatise condemning it. †

The Sacred Heart:

“I Will Pour Abundant Blessings on All Their Enterprises.”

By Father Joseph McDonnell, SJ

Note: We know from the Fatima Message that Our Lord wants devotion to the Immaculate Heart to be placed next to Devotion to His Sacred Heart, thus the Message of Fatima and the Message of the Sacred Heart are greatly intertwined, particularly in their calls for Reparation for man’s sins. One of the Twelve Promises to those who are devoted to the Sacred Heart is “I will pour Abundant Blessings on all their Enterprises”. The learned Father Joseph McDonnell, a true apostle of the Sacred Heart, gives us magnificent considerations on this Divine Promise.

1) God’s blessing, in general, on our enterprises.

In many passages of Sacred Scripture promises of temporal prosperity are held out to those who serve God. “All whatsoever he shall do shall prosper,” says the Psalmist (*Ps. 1: 3*); and the prophet Amos speaks of the temporal blessings that shall follow the Redemption, when “every hill shall be tilled ... and they shall plant vineyards ... and make gardens and eat the fruits of them” (*Amos 9: 13, 14*). In the Book of Deuteronomy, especially, many temporal blessings are promised to the observers of God’s law: “If thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord... all these blessings... shall come upon thee. ... Blessed shall be ... the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the droves of thy herds and the folds of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy barns and blessed thy stores. ... The Lord will send forth a blessing upon ... all the works of thy hands ... the Lord will make thee abound with all goods.” (*Deut. 28: 1-11*).

2) The special blessing of the Sacred Heart upon our enterprises.

As we have seen, God in His general Providence watches, with tender care, even over our temporal interests. Besides this, there is God’s special Providence, whereby His more intimate friends and faithful servants become the objects of His very special predilection. Holding the foremost place among these special friends of God



are the clients of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. With them, as with the Apostles at the Last Supper, Our Blessed Lord holds very intimate and loving converse. They hold, with regard to His Divine Majesty, relations similar to those that exist between a Sovereign and his more privileged and favored courtiers. Their requests are listened to, their petitions answered, where less favored persons might not get a hearing.

Furthermore, Our Lord, Who is goodness and generosity itself, repays in truly royal fashion and a thousand-fold the little that we try to do for Him. He never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity. In proportion, therefore, as we are devoted to His interests and strive to promote these interests, in that same proportion, though in vastly greater measure, He will watch over and promote our every interest, whether temporal or spiritual.

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In the summer of 2007, we were in Brazil for the Conference, “The Only Way to World Peace.” How much has happened since then, both in the Apostolate and in the world.

Last summer, the U.S. dollar began dropping against other currencies, and the price of gasoline began its steep ascent. These and other changes have wreaked havoc in many people’s budgets, including our own. We had to cut television programming, for example, as we scrambled to work within a more austere budget. We have also cut down on Rosary Rallies.

But this did not deter our Apostolate. Rather, it has stimulated us to work more creatively in different directions. A recent thrust has been to modernize and broaden the website resources at www.fatima.org:

Did you know that one can access Fatima-related materials from our website in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Swahili, German and Dutch, as well as English? In fact, after English, Italian is the most popular language for our website. (No doubt this is because of the very effective publicity this past year.)

When you do visit the webpage, you will find a number of changes: weekly postings of saints for the week, news, transcripts from conferences, *The Fatima Crusader* highlights, television shows on-demand and more.

Please take the time to revisit the website, traveling from your armchair instead of your gas guzzler, and sign up for weekly web updates. †



THE SACRED HEART:
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3) Conditions upon which material blessings of the Sacred Heart are granted to us.

The Sacred Heart is ready to grant us the temporal blessings that we ask for, provided they do not militate against our higher and eternal interests. It may be that God foresees that that success of our undertaking, that increase of material prosperity, that lucrative appointment, that release from sorrow, suffering, or ill-health, is coupled with our spiritual ruin — may mean the loss of our immortal souls.

Riches, honors, pleasure, immunity from suffering, are not always a blessing. They may be the very opposite. Would it be bestowing a favor on a son, asks St. Augustine, to place in his hands a sword, a firearm, with which he might, perhaps, wound or even kill himself? “It is God’s mercy that listens to our prayers today”, adds the same saint; “it is His same mercy that is deaf to them tomorrow.” Hence we must not be discouraged if our prayers for temporal favors are not always answered. We must pray for these things with entire resignation to God’s will, we must ask them with the proviso that they are not inimical to our higher and eternal interests. †

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