

A METHOD OF PRAYER COMBINING SPIRIT AND MIND  
BY SILVESTRO DA ROSSANO

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INTRODUCTION

Silvestro Franco da Rossano (+ 1596) belongs to the ranks of the devout and popular Capuchin preachers of the later part of the sixteenth century who were anxious to launch or revitalize devotional or charitable initiatives. He stepped aside from the position of being “a learned man who was a good and accomplished preacher” who “displayed a great zeal for the Christian doctrine contained in the feasts, he established confraternities, and helped them after they had been set up and praised and recommended them in his preaching”. (cf. *I Frati Cappuccini*, vol II, section I, doc. 56) In fact it was this aspect of his apostolic commitment that made the greatest impression on those who knew him. Above all else he preached about devotion to the most precious blood that had been shed by the Incarnate Word. He never missed an opportunity to emphasise this. He promoted this devotion in the Confraternities that he tried to establish in various cities where he preached. He did this in Piacenza in 1570, in Florence in 1572 and in Fermo in 1573. To this end he composed appropriate rules and norms and wrote booklets and spiritual leaflets containing an explanation of “the method” for carrying out this pious practice.

The librarians within the Order mention a particular work, which was printed in Florence in 1573 which bore the title: *Twelve Devout Considerations Concerning the Twelve Times That The Most Precious Blood of Our Saviour Jesus Christ was Shed*. However, up to the present time no copy of this edition has been found. However, one of his booklets bearing the title *A Method for Contemplating and Performing the Devotion to the Most Precious Blood*, by F. Silvestro, a Capuchin, is listed in the *Index* in Parma in 1580. This work is probably more genuine, original and close to the style of the Capuchins who lived in Calabria. We do not know the reason for this prohibition. There is a booklet which was printed in Venice in 1613 which contains in a very simple and clear manner at least an abbreviated version, if not the whole, of this text, in the form of prayer intentions for each of the twelve times that the Blood of Christ was shed. This text bears the title: *A Brief Method for Praying Prompted by the Shedding of the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.

It was precisely his activity as the advocate among the people of the spirituality of the devotion towards the Passion and the Blood of Christ that made him develop a more extensive teaching on the practice of mental prayer. In an explanatory letter to the General Inquisitor in Venice, Father Ludovico da Rimini, a Dominican, dated 31 July 1574, he personally explained this connection: “Because I had taught the devotion to the precious blood of Jesus the Saviour, as Your Reverence knew and approved, I was asked to write down some points regarding that devotion and concerning the frequency of prayer to exercise, perform and sustain this devotion”.

## TEXT

### *1. The way a spiritual person should conduct himself when praying to God and the Saints.*

#### *Christ teaches us to pray. Chapter 1.*

**4508** The nature of true love is that it not only makes the lover similar to the object that is loved but also that it makes the object of love similar to the lover.

We recognise this degree of perfection by means of clear indications and certain signs of God's true love, which not only joins<sup>1</sup> us to Him in love, but makes us like Him in being His true image as St Paul says.<sup>2</sup> If by divine love we have been predestined to grace and glory, called by the mark of His love, justified by the justification of faith, of love, of hope and of good works, and by what is most important, through the mercy and merits of Christ, this was so that we would not only be like Him by eternal glory in our home above, but also like Him by divine grace while we are still on the journey. We are to be like Him while we are still on our way, in all His holy, just and pious works, which certainly do not equal all His many<sup>3</sup> indescribable gifts.

**4509** Note well that I say that we must become like Him by performing all the works which He has shown to be necessary for salvation. This applies specially to holy prayer, which He encouraged not only by His ample teaching, but by lively and effective examples. His Majesty desired to pray before and during His Passion up till He died. He did all this because we needed instruction for the most serious motives and reasons. He wished to pray so as to show us that He possessed not only the most perfect active life but also the most perfect contemplative life and this is what the Evangelist indicated in the Lord's Prayer<sup>4</sup> in order to provide us with an example of the contemplative life.

#### *[Fifteen Motives of Christ's Prayer]*

**4510** He wished to pray to show that He was holy because praying was a part of holiness, as the Prophet says: "For this shall everyone that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time."<sup>5</sup> He wanted to instruct us how to be holy.

Christ wanted to pray to show that He was the perfect lawgiver for whose perfection it was proper that He confirm what He had ordered by precept and counsel by means of effective, lively and true works. Because Jesus Christ had laid down His law containing clear precepts concerning praying, He wanted to be the first to observe them<sup>6</sup> and have us observing them to by following His example.

Christ wanted to pray to show conformity to the Patriarchs and Prophets, who prayed fervently to the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> *Voles = volle.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom 8, 29-30; Col 1, 13; 1 Thes 2, 12.

<sup>3</sup> This means that God's works are so manifold that we cannot describe them.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Lk 6, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ps 31, 6 (*Vulg*) "Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus in tempore opportuno."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Acts 1, 1.

He wanted to pray to show us that we should be careful concerning divine cult.

He wanted to pray to confirm his miracles and so the Evangelist says that when He fed the multitude He prayed to the Father; and in a similar way when He raised Lazarus He offered thanks to the Eternal Father, and when He saw the outstanding success of His disciples He prayed in a similar way thanking the Father.<sup>1</sup>

**4511** He wanted to pray at the Supper<sup>2</sup> to show that He was the grateful Son of the Eternal Father and that by the thanksgiving that He merited we might be able to offer thanks.

He wanted to pray to the Father after the Supper to ask the Father to free us from all evil, as the Evangelist says in the person of Jesus Christ: “I pray to you for them so that you would keep them from evil.”<sup>3</sup>

He prayed so as to love us all with spiritual love, for His Majesty says that in and through prayer we are able to flee from God’s anger and obtain every grace, for He says: “Whatever you ask of the Father in my name will be granted to you.”<sup>4</sup>

For our instruction He wanted to pray during his Passion first of all to teach us self-control. Thus when His Majesty was full of sorrow and grief and was feeling pain and fear He said to His disciples who were very upset: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay here while I go to that place to pray.”<sup>5</sup> According to Saint Bernard this was to inform us that melancholy, regret and heartbreak cannot be eased except by holy prayer.<sup>6</sup>

**4512** The Majesty of our Lord wanted to pray to instruct us about prudence. This is why He said to His disciples: “Pray, lest you enter into temptation”<sup>7</sup> According to St Bernard these words mean that it is the duty of a true Christian to watch and pray and these actions belong to the virtue of prudence.<sup>8</sup> St Peter the Apostle says the same concerning Jesus Christ: “Be prudent therefore and watch in prayer”.<sup>9</sup>

He wanted to pray to teach us the virtue of fortitude. Thus history teaches that when He was in agony He prayed at length until He shed blood.<sup>10</sup> The devout St Bernard says concerning these words that the virtue of fortitude includes persevering to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf respectively Mt 14, 19; Mk 6, 41; Jn 6, 11; !!, 41-42; Lk 9, 16; 10, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lk 22, 17. 19; Mt 26, 27; Mk 14, 22-23; 1Cor 11, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jn 17, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Jn 14, 13-14; 16, 23-24; Mt 21,22.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 26, 38; Mk 14, 34.

<sup>6</sup> This thought is like that of St Bernard in *Liber de modo bene Vivendi*, ch 6 n. 159 (PL 184, 1219s, 1299). Quotations from St Bernard and ecclesiastical writers and Doctors that are to be found in the work of Silvestro da Rossano are given according to their meaning and are often vague. For this reason it is often difficult to identify the precise passage. Where it is difficult to identify the passage we shall refer to texts which say something similar.

<sup>7</sup> Lk 22, 40; Mt 26, 41; Mk 14, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. in the works of St Bernard *Guerrici abbatis de resurrectione Domini sem. III*, n. 2-3 (PL 185, 149s).

<sup>9</sup> 1 Pt 4, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Cf Lk 22, 44.

point of shedding blood.<sup>1</sup> St Paul said that we should resist to the point of shedding blood.<sup>2</sup>

He wanted to pray to teach us the virtue of justice. This is why He said: Let not my will but your will be done.”<sup>3</sup> St Anselm says that true justice consists in bringing our will into conformity with the will of God. St Augustine says the same thing.<sup>4</sup>

**4513** He wanted to pray to enlighten us concerning faith so that recognising with revulsion the sensuality of the flesh, a disgust that is overcome by charity, He could show us that He was truly God and Man and we should believe that His Majesty was truly the Son of God when He said: *Abba Father*.<sup>5</sup>

He wanted to pray to instruct us about life-giving hope, so that we should hope for divine consolation, receive it in holy prayer, just as Christ received it. Thus He wanted an angel to appear to console Him.<sup>6</sup>

Finally He wanted to pray to teach us true charity. Thus He said after He had been bound, scourged, crowned with thorns and sentenced and nailed to the cross: “Father, forgive them for they know what they do.”<sup>7</sup> He demonstrated perfect charity by these words, just as He had taught it when giving instruction.

From what we have said one can understand how pleasing prayer is to Christ, and how we should bring ourselves into line with the teaching of His Majesty and put it into practice.

*After the example of Christ the author speaks about the example of the saints (chapter 2) and other special reasons that draw us to pray such as: examples, advice, admonition, thankfulness, interior and external cult, union with God, conservation, to obtain graces, the certainty of being heard, the necessity and usefulness of prayer considered in the light of natural law, the positive law of God, the moral law, history, the prophets, the Gospels, the Gospel and Canonical law and finally how prayer is praised by everyone (Chapter 3). Concerning the last point he wrote:*

**4514** [...] It is marvellous that prayer has received so much applause. When praising prayer some have said that it is one of the central factors in the spiritual life so that just as all the workings of this world revolve around a fixed central point so also the spiritual works of the holy Church revolve around prayer.

Others have said that prayer is the most fertile soil that produces fruit for those living on it. Others have said that it is water which quenches thirst and the passion of our libido. Others have said that it is the fresh air from which people inhale the spirit to live in Christ. Others have said that it is a fire that kindles divine love. Others have said that it is an infinite treasure which enriches souls with divine possessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Bernard, *Liber seu tractatus de caritate*, ch 1 (PL 184, 584-586).

<sup>2</sup> Cf Heb 12, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Lk 22, 42; Mk 14, 36; Mt 26, 39-42.

<sup>4</sup> Cf St Anselm *Liber de voluntate Dei*, ch 4; and especially *Cur Deus homo*, lib. I, c. 11; *Meditationes*, medit. XI (PL 158, 583, 376,766); St Augustine *Serm.* 126, c. 3, n. 4 (PL 38, 700); *Ennerratio in Ps.* 93, n. 18 (PL 37, 1206).

<sup>5</sup> Cf Mk 14, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lk 22, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Lk 23, 34.

Others say that prayer is food that satisfies not only men and Angels but even God. Others say that prayer is a sun which enlightens. Others say that it is a shining star. Others say that prayer is the first mover that moves everything else. Others say that it has more strength than the first mover, because the first mover only moves what is subject to it and can be moved, whereas prayer moves the unmoveable God to compassion and is stronger than natural life, since it stops the movement of the sun, quickens life, cures sickness, confers everything that is good. Its praises are so many and varied that it would take a lot to tell of them.

Finally you should know that just as a bird that has no wings cannot fly to the heights, so too a Christian who does not pray cannot fly to God who is really the highest point. So I conclude that we are obliged to pray from all points of view.

*Chapter Four which treats what constitutes prayer.*

**4515** Although the word prayer can be considered from many different points of view, nevertheless saintly people who have been enlightened by the grace of God have reduced the diversity to only two points. The first is how prayer can be considered by human knowledge and how it can be considered from a divine perspective. We shall consider it under both perspectives..

So under the first heading they say that prayer is *Oratio quasi oris ratio* (*Prayer is the work of the mouth*) that is it has to do with eloquence or speech. This is part of grammar, logic, rhetoric and natural and spiritual philosophy. Speaking correctly pertains to grammar and speaking the truth to logic. The art of persuasion belongs to rhetoric. Proving the truth belongs to natural philosophy. Supernatural discourse explains what this or that is. Although these processes are scientific methods they can deal with spiritual prayer which is further dealt with by the divine science which is theology.<sup>1</sup>

[*The use of grammar*]

**4516** If grammar demands the appropriate clauses, phrases and words for correct speech<sup>2</sup> so too anyone who prays to God must do so in the right context and that requires that the body be comfortable, but reverent. It requires the right disposition and that the soul reaches out to God with devotion. It requires the correct word which means purity of heart, free from malice and here the correct word is the word of Sacred Scripture: *If I have iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.*<sup>3</sup> This is the same as saying that God will not look upon prayer which is offered without the proper intention.

Furthermore grammar not only requires appropriate clauses, phrases and words, but also other parts of the discourse<sup>4</sup> for example parts of speech. The person who is involved in praying to God must play his part in the exercise being moved by fear and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cassiodorus, *Comment. In Psalm.*, ad Ps 18, vers. 14 (*PL* 70, 285). This application of the human sciences to prayer is rather interesting and original

<sup>2</sup> *Il parlare* in our version is *l'orazione* in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Ps 65, 18 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>4</sup> In the text *dell'orazione*.

love of God as David says: “*I am a partaker with all them that fear you, and keep your commandments.*”<sup>1</sup>

Just as grammar requires the use of the pronoun to say, I you, him, we, those and these, prayer has to include I, you, him, us, you and those that is everybody since all have to become involved in this holy exercise. Thus it is written: *All these were persevering with one mind in prayer* with reference to the Apostles and the disciples of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

**5417** Just as grammar needs adjectives to say I am holy, you are holy, he is holy, we are holy you and the others are holy, when we pray to God we should all be holy. Thus the Prophet says: *For this shall everyone that is holy pray to you in a seasonable time.*<sup>3</sup>

Grammar uses the adverb to indicate time, place and manner, that is how when and where. A person who prays to God also wants to indicate the same thing and this is what Christ said: *One should pray always and never faint.*<sup>4</sup> Here “always” and “never” are adverbs that indicate time. Those who pray need to be aware of the place to pray. Christ says: *When you pray, enter into your room, and having shut the door, pray to your Father in secret.*<sup>5</sup> Here entering and staying indicate specific places. Whoever prays needs an adverb to indicate the manner of praying. Christ indicates this when He says: *When you pray do not be like the hypocrites.*<sup>6</sup> Here the word “like” indicates the manner in which prayer is to be carried out.

Grammar uses clauses. Christ does the same when He says that we need to have God’s honour in our minds when we pray. *That in all things God may be honoured.*<sup>7</sup> We should have our salvation in mind as David said: *I will not set before my mind any unjust thing. I hated the workers of iniquity.*<sup>8</sup> He also said: *I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved.*<sup>9</sup>

**4518** Grammar uses an exclamation to signify trepidation of heart. It is necessary that a person who is praying manifests anxiety. The Prophet says: *Ah, ah, ah, Lord God behold I cannot speak, for I am a child.*<sup>10</sup> David says: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!*<sup>11</sup> St Augustine says: *Woe am I, Lord Jesus, because I am nothing and you are everything your heart has not yet captured me.*<sup>12</sup>

Grammar uses the conjunction which united one thing to another, A person who prays to God should join one part to another namely what is human to the divine will and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf p. 118, 63 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>2</sup> Acta 1, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ps 31, 6 (*Vulg.*). Cf. above note 5.

<sup>4</sup> Lk 18, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 6, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Mt 6, 5.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pt 4, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ps 100, 3 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>9</sup> Ps 15, 8; Acts 2, 25.

<sup>10</sup> Jer 1, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ps 119, 5 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum* (PL 40, 864ss).

join them<sup>1</sup> This is how we place all our hope in God as David says: *It is good for me to adhere to my God to put my hope in the Lord God.*<sup>2</sup>

This is how to offer fitting praise to God.

[*The use of logic*]

**4519** With respect to logic we say that prayer is designed to find the truth and shun falsity. Thus whoever prays to Christ should have the intention of being enlightened by the truth of Christ and to shun all diabolical falsity. Thus the wise man says: *My mouth shall meditate truth, and my lips shall hate wickedness.*<sup>3</sup>

Logic usually deals with three elements, the major, the minor and the conclusion. Thus it is necessary that prayer has three elements, namely faith, hope and charity. Faith is the first necessary element in prayer and therefore St Augustine says: “Whoever prays without faith who wishes to provide exquisite food to a great Lord in the dark of night without a light”<sup>4</sup> The Lord is the inner spirit; the dark is<sup>5</sup> lack of faith. The light is faith and the food is prayer. The second element is hope and this is required for prayer because St Augustine says: “Whoever prays without hope is building castles in the air”<sup>6</sup> The Third element is charity, which is so necessary for those who pray that St Augustine says: *Whoever prays to God without charity is praying to God without God, because God is charity.*<sup>7</sup>

[*The use of rhetoric*]

**4520** Many things are required for considering rhetoric for prayer or as a method of speaking. The first thing is to make up one’s mind concerning to whom the prayer should be offered, that is which person are we praying to. A Christian should address God as He is surrounded by glory and by the saints as He is three in one, Father of all. That is why Christ said: *When you pray say: Our Father who art in heaven.*<sup>8</sup> Was there ever an orator who addressed a greater person or a greater gathering than this?

Secondly, rhetoric makes petitions. Thus whoever prays to God makes petitions. However these petitions are greater and contain all that is required just as Christ has taught. He said that we should ask firstly: *Your name be held holy.*<sup>9</sup> What could we ask for that would be greater than spreading the sanctification of the divine name? St Ambrose says that our justification and fulfilment consists in doing this.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Coniunzione* in our version is *continuazione* in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ps 72, 28 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>3</sup> Prov 8, 7.

<sup>4</sup> St Augustine, *Ep.* 194 c. III, n. 24 (*PL* 38, 655). Among other Giovanni da Fano insisted on faith in his *Arte della unione*.

<sup>5</sup> *Sons* here is *è* in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Ep.* 130 *ad Probam*, c. 133, n. 24 (*PL* 33, 504); *Enchiridion ad Laurentium*, c. 7 (*PL* 40, 234).

<sup>7</sup> *Idem De spiritu et anima*, c. 16 (*PL* 40, 792).

<sup>8</sup> Lk 11,2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Cf. St Ambrose, *De sacramentis*, lib. VI, c. 5, n.24; and particularly lib. V, c. 4, n. 21 (*PL* 16, 470, 479s).

Secondly he says that we should say: *Your kingdom come.*<sup>1</sup> What greater prize could we want than the wealth and honour of God's kingdom? Therefore St Augustine says: "*We are indeed God's heirs; fellow heirs undeniably together with Christ*".<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, it says: *Your will be done in heaven as it is on earth.*<sup>3</sup> What greater rule is there to order human life than doing God's will which is not only a law for heavenly and earthly creatures but for God himself? *All things are in your power, and there is none that can resist your will.*<sup>4</sup>

**4521** Fourthly it says: *Give us this day our daily bread.*<sup>5</sup> What greater good could we ask of God than the assistance of his continual providence which *directs everything*<sup>6</sup> and which is symbolised under the metaphor of bread?

Fifthly it says: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*<sup>7</sup> What greater consolation could we ask for than to have our trespasses forgiven which shows God's great mercy by means of which He wants to save us? *Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us.*<sup>8</sup> This takes place on condition that we show similar mercy to our neighbours and so imitate him in practice.

Sixthly it says: *And lead us not into temptation.*<sup>9</sup> What greater victory and triumph could we ask of God for our life which is completely surrounded by temptations placed there by our adversaries than that they would all be mastered? The real crown consists in such a victory. *Only he who strives lawfully will be crowned.*<sup>10</sup>

Seventhly it says: *But deliver us from evil.*<sup>11</sup> We could not ask for greater freedom than to be delivered from evil, from crime and punishment, since we have been called to such freedom which is the true glory of God's children: *the liberty of the glory of the children of God.*<sup>12</sup> If it is not possible to make better requests than these, rhetoric could not have found them with all its innovations.

**4522** Part of rhetoric is to persuade by using examples and argument. Now Christ has to persuade God not by telling Him what we are asking since *he knows before you ask him.*<sup>13</sup> We should conduct<sup>14</sup> ourselves as experts in persuasion and say: "O Lord, since you forgave your enemies; Lord, since you freed David; since you freed Susanna; since you forgave Nebucadonosor" giving similar examples and arguments

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. note 47.

<sup>2</sup> This is really St Paul: cf. Rom 8, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Mt 10, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Esther 13, 9 (*Deuterocanonical Vulg.*).

<sup>5</sup> Mt 6, 11; Lk 11, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Wis 14, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Mt 6, 12; Lk 11, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Titus 3, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Mt 6,13;Lk 11, 4.

<sup>10</sup> The text has been turned around. The Biblical quote is 2 Tim 2, 5. *For he who strives for mastery is not crowned, except he strives lawfully.*

<sup>11</sup> Mt 6, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 8, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Mt 6, 8.

<sup>14</sup> The style of the text here is convoluted. *Portiamo* should read *ci comportiamo*.



we might say: *If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord who shall stand it? Shall dust confess to you? Lord, where are your ancient mercies?*<sup>1</sup>

Rhetoric and logic make use of method and examples. This is what Christ taught us: *Pray in spirit and truth, since the Father seeks those who adore in spirit and in truth.*<sup>2</sup> This is the true method. You will not find a better example than what St Paul taught: *Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Christ that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.*<sup>3</sup> This is the correct method of praying to Christ.

[*The use of Philosophy*]

**4523** When speaking about his speculations<sup>4</sup> the natural philosopher sometimes offers proofs going from cause to effect and at other times from effect to cause. Someone who prays to God should also offer proofs by proceeding as David did from cause to effect when he said: *For you are great and do wonderful things: you are God alone,*<sup>5</sup> or by going from effect to cause: *Great are the works of the Lord, sought out according to what he wills.*<sup>6</sup>

When speaking the supernatural philosopher should declare the essence of things by giving a definition. One who is offering spiritual prayers should do the same. He should come to the knowledge of who God is and who are we. David did this: *Great is our Lord, and great is his power and his greatness has no end.*<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere he said: *O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is your name in the whole earth.*<sup>8</sup>

We must recognise who we are just as David did: *Lord what is man? Man resembles what is vain and his days are short lived.*<sup>9</sup> It says elsewhere: *What is a man that you should magnify him, or why do you set your heart upon him?*<sup>10</sup> St Augustine came to this conclusion concerning God and himself, saying in his prayer: *Lord who are and we who do not exist.*<sup>11</sup> I shall tell that when a person gains this knowledge he gains a great deal and so St Augustine says: *When I know you I shall know myself and when I know myself I shall know you.*<sup>12</sup>

Up to now I have dealt with the scientific method of the meaning of prayer as it is applied to mortal spirituality, because this is very important.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. respectively, Ps 129, 3; 29, 10; 88, 50 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jn 4, 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor 4, 10.

<sup>4</sup> In the original text *orazione* here *speculazione*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ps 85, 10; 71, 18 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>6</sup> Ps 110, 2 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>7</sup> Ps 146, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ps 8, 2, 10 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>9</sup> Ps 143, 3-4; 8, 5 (*Vulg.*); Heb 2,6.

<sup>10</sup> Job 7, 17.

<sup>11</sup> A concept which is like that of St Augustine, *Enarr. In Ps.* 134, n. 4 (PL) 37, 1741).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. St. Augustine, *Soliloquia* II, 1, 1 (PL 32, 885); see also St Bernard, *Serm. 2 de diversis*, n. 1; *Sermo. 40*, n. 3; *Sermo.36, in Cant.*, n. 5ss and 37, n. 1ss (PL 183, 542, 648, 969-971).

[Prayer according to Theology]

**4524** Let us now address the notion of prayer according to the way it is understood by holy theologians. In their teaching they say: *Prayer is a virtue that pertains to divine worship by means of which the faithful offer cult to God with heartfelt affection to ask him for necessary graces or to make satisfaction for sins.*<sup>1</sup>

Firstly it says that it is a pious virtue, which means that prayer is the worship of God. Thus St Augustine says that such cult means *the worship of God*. Thus when he wishes to translate the Greek word Theosebia he says: *Theosebias is the worship of God.*<sup>2</sup> Prayer is nothing else but the worship of God, which is carried out with heartfelt affection by the faithful for the purpose of either praising God, or asking for a particular grace, or to satisfy a debt or obligation that we have incurred.

**4525** However, wishing to explain more clearly how prayer is a virtue that pertains to divine worship, I say that it should be described in this manner precisely because it directs all the virtues of the soul and of the body towards the worship of God so that the soul cannot pray independently of the body and the soul. It directs the mind to know God as the highest truth, the will to love Him as the greatest good, and the memory to remember Him as the greatest benefactor. It directs the interior senses to imagine, to consider and think about divine matters. It directs the body to make various devout gestures before the Majesty of God, sometimes kneeling, sometimes rising to kiss the cross, sometimes weeping, sometimes striking the chest, sometimes casting the eyes on holy images, sometimes moving the tongue to speak, sometime kissing the ground, sometimes moving the heart to sigh and sometimes moving the whole body to bow in reverence at the name of God, good Jesus and the saints.<sup>3</sup> Truly holy prayer means divine cult and the virtue of worship.

Secondly, prayer is truly a virtue pertaining to divine worship because of its relationship with the virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude.<sup>4</sup> Thus if a person possesses the virtue of justice it unites him to God through prayer. *He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord.*<sup>5</sup> If a person possesses the virtue of prudence it unites him to God. *Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayer.*<sup>6</sup> If a person has the virtue of temperance it unites him to God, and Job says: *If we receive good things from the hand of God why should we not be submissive?*<sup>7</sup> If a person has the virtue of fortitude it unites him to God as it did in the case of David: *My strength is the Lord who saves me.* He says again: *I entrust my strength to your care.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Oratio est virtus pia, qua cum affectu mentis colitur Deus a fidelibus, ordinate tum ad laudandum Deum, sive ad impetrandum ab eo quae necessaria sunt, sive ad satisfaciendum pro delictis.*

L'orazione è una pia virtù con cui i fedeli con affetto di cuore offrono il culto a Dio per lodarlo, impetrare da lui le grazie necessarie e soddisfare per i peccati.

<sup>2</sup> *77 Addimanda* in the text = *chiama, definisce*. This ancient verb is used frequently by the author. For the quote from St Augustine cf. *De civ. Dei*, X,1, 3 (PL 41, 279); see St Bonaventure, *Sent. III*, dist. 9, art. II, q. 1, concl. 3 (*Op. omnia III*, 241b).

<sup>3</sup> This is bodily prayer.

<sup>4</sup> These are the Cardinal Virtues.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sir 39, 6.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet 4, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Job 2, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. respectively Ps 117, 28 (*Vulg.*); Exodus 15, 2; Ps 58, 10 (*Vulg.*).

**5426** I conclude therefore that prayer orientates justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude. However, prayer is called a virtue that pertains to divine worship because it directs all the theological virtues towards the worship of God. If you have faith prayer is what makes it unfailling and directs it towards God. *Let him ask in faith without wavering* as the Apostle says concerning this matter.<sup>1</sup> If you have charity prayer directs this towards God by praying not only for your friends but also for your enemies. *Pray for those who persecute you.*<sup>2</sup> If a person has hope it leads him to God. *God. Because you, O Lord, are my hope, you have made the most High my refuge.*<sup>3</sup>

Prayer is a virtue that pertains to divine worship because it directs holy law to divine worship and obliges us to observe God's precepts, as well as those pertaining to out neighbour. In prayer we desire and seek the grace to observe the law as David did: *I have longed for your salvation and the law is my meditation.*<sup>4</sup> In another place he says: *Give me understanding and I will search your law.*<sup>5</sup>

Prayer is a virtue pertaining to divine worship because it orientates all the sacraments of the Church to the divine Majesty and thus no sacrament can be administered without prayer which takes place at the beginning, during the administration and at the end.

**4527** Prayer is called a virtue that pertains to divine worship because all vows that are temporary and all vows that are perpetual are made to the divine Mercy by means of prayer. This is evident. All fasting, all Masses, all pilgrimages, all donations are made for the purpose of divine worship. In like manner holy obedience, holy poverty, holy virginity and chastity as well as living an enclosed life are vowed to God for all are extrinsic and intrinsic divine worship. The first transgression against a vow is to abandon prayer, because this is the true guide to the spiritual observance of what has been promised to the divine Majesty. There is no more perverse deceit which the devils use to trick religious that to make them abandon prayer and the interior spirit because once this has been achieved *they have been seduced into all kinds of errors.*<sup>6</sup>

Again prayer pertains to the virtue of divine worship because all the Church's ceremonies, all the activities of its ministers, all hymns, ringing of bells and playing of organs, vestments, decorations are all focused on divine worship and all are governed by prayer, conducted in prayer and through prayer. Indeed, I would say more that whoever prayer properly not only offers God all the ceremonies of the Church but all the works of creatures and of the Creator as we read with regard to blessed Francis:

*The delight found in everything  
He stored as an offering  
To its Maker's glory paid.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. James 1, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 5, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Ps 90, 9 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>4</sup> Ps 118, 174 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>5</sup> Ps 118, 43 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 2 Thes 2, 10. Note the clarity and concrete nature of this concept.

<sup>7</sup> Translation of this verse taken from FA:ED I, p. 328. Cf. Julian of Speyer, *Off, rhythmicum S. Francisci*: ant 5 of Vespers (AF X, 375), see also 2 Cel 165. The quote as it appears in the text is not

**5428** He says more. Prayer is a virtue pertaining to the worship of God because it is required that it be said with affection<sup>1</sup> which is the source of our merit and so the sacred theologians say that we gain merit or demerits by means of the workings of the will as its base so that prayer is part of charity which is based in the will.<sup>2</sup> So we say that when our will is clothed in affective prayer it is wrapped in divine worship so that: *Prayer is the mind's worshipful fondness for God.* If a person says a thousand prayers without emotion he has gained nothing for St Gregory says: *Sounds do not reach God's ears but rather the emotion with which the sound is uttered.*<sup>3</sup>

It is said that prayer is a virtue that pertains to divine worship because of its compassionate objective who is God himself. Therefore we read in the definition: *by means of which God is worshipped.*

Prayer is sometimes directed to its chief object as Father, sometimes as the merciful one, sometimes as the benefactor, sometimes as a friend, sometimes as the ultimate good from whom all good comes to us. The ways in which a person actually directs his prayer is the way in which he is actually contemplating God.

**4529** Prayer is called a virtue of divine worship in relation to what is expected of Christ's faithful who practice divine worship in a special manner. This is true in a special way of the ministers of the Church who carry out divine worship and who should be adept at worship.

Finally, prayer is called a virtue of divine worship in relation to its objective since to praise and thank God is true worship as is also asking for grace in necessary circumstances, making satisfaction for due punishment when prayer is imposed as a penance<sup>4</sup>. It is also worship when offering thanks for the alms that have been received. Here I bring to an end this long discussion in which we have considered the nature of holy prayer which is the virtue of offering worship that directs all worship.<sup>5</sup>

*Chapter five which deals with the first feature of prayer, namely preparation.*

**4530** Since we are here to speak about preparation for prayer, I cannot find anything better than what was taught by Paul the Apostle: *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.*<sup>6</sup>

By these words he means that we should rejoice twice and this is the basic disposition for prayer. We ought to rejoice in God for two reasons; firstly because God to whom we are praying is the supreme good, who contains all good which cannot be exhausted; secondly this God loves us and performs good things for us. Hence there are two reasons for rejoicing: firstly because God gives consolation, secondly because

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accurate and this shows how there are frequent omission and errors in this edition which is probably due to the fact that it was never revised by the author.

<sup>1</sup> This is the special characteristic of Franciscan prayer.

<sup>2</sup> According to scholastic theology charity resides in the will.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Gregory, *Moralium lib. XXII*, c. 17, n. 43 (*PL* 76, 238).

<sup>4</sup> *Ci* here is *ne* in the text.

<sup>5</sup> Even though this outline is almost scholastic in style we can see that Silvestro da Rossano has a complete and concrete understanding of prayer as the virtue of divine worship.

<sup>6</sup> Phil 4, 4.

God sends tribulation and we should rejoice in the Lord about both and say with Augustine: “Lord, may you be blessed when you send me happiness; may you be always blessed when you send me tribulation”.<sup>1</sup> Indeed we ought to rejoice in the Lord for two reasons since when we pray He forgives us our failings and confers grace.

This is the first thing to be sought when praying, because when a person is contented by everything that God does, he develops a desire to pray, and with this desire comes a determination to pray and through this determination comes proficiency in prayer and from proficiency comes frequent acts of holy prayer.

**4531** The other thing that the Apostle St Paul says is: *Let your modesty be known to all men.*<sup>2</sup> Such modesty cannot exist apart from the habit of charity, which is totally modest and so modifies<sup>3</sup> all virtues, because *charity is the bond of perfection.*<sup>4</sup> If you wish to know more clearly about such charity this is how Paul describes it: *Charity is patient, is kind, is not envious, is not arrogant, does not think evil, does not act perversely, is not ambitious, does not enjoy iniquity, rejoices in the truth: believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and bears all things.*<sup>5</sup>

This is the kind of prayer that we ought to offer. We should be patient when praying, because the one to whom we are praying was patient, so much so that *he was led like a sheep to the slaughter.*<sup>6</sup>

We ought to be kind because the one to whom we are praying is *kind and steadfast.*<sup>7</sup>

We should not be envious because the one to whom we are praying *was delivered up out of envy.*<sup>8</sup>

We should not be proud because the one to whom we are praying *humbled himself.*<sup>9</sup>

**4532** We should not commit evil because the one to whom we pray is the one *from whom all good things come.*<sup>10</sup> Considering all these things all of us ought to be modest, not thinking evil thoughts because He to whom we are praying *thinks thoughts of peace and not of affliction.*<sup>11</sup> When we are praying<sup>12</sup> we should not seek our own welfare, because the one to whom we are praying did not seek anything for himself, *he came to seek and save that which was lost.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Enarr. In ps. 32*, II, n. 3; *in ps. 33*, II, n. 3 (*PL* 36, 278, 308s).

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> This interpretation of the word “modesty” as transforming all virtues is interesting.

<sup>4</sup> Col 3, 14.

<sup>5</sup> This is the hymn regarding charity; 1Cor 13, 4-7. This is a splendid and original application to prayer of these features of charity, as if to say that prayer involves love. The concept comes from Augustine: *Caritas ipsa orat.* Cf. *In epist. Joannis ad Pathos*, tract. VI n. 8 (*PL* 35, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Is 53, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Wis 7, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mt 27, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Phil 2, 8.

<sup>10</sup> This is the meaning of Qo (Ecclesiastes) 3, 11; Gen 1, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Jer 29, 11.

<sup>12</sup> In the text this word was joined to the preceding Latin quotation which is another proof that this edition has not been corrected.

<sup>13</sup> Mt 18, 11.

We should not be ambitious, because the one to whom we are praying *took the form of a servant when praying*.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore we should be so modest that we see everything that is good, hope for what is good, regret all that is evil and rejoice in what is true. Charity teaches us this kind of modesty and we ought to approach prayer with nothing but this modesty.

**4533** Saint Paul has more to say: *the Lord is near*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, anyone who is praying should bear this in mind that when we pray God is more intimately present to our hearts than our hearts are to ourselves.<sup>3</sup> Thus when we pray we ought to know that that holy God is with us through His presence, His essence, His wisdom and His power and sees our thoughts and knows our opinions and our wishes in so far as they are correct in His sight and we should recognise that being reverent, attentive and knowing that God is present prepares us for prayer.

**4534** St Paul also says: *Don not be concerned*.<sup>4</sup> He means that if we wish to be ready to pray we should not be concerned about the things of this world but direct all our thoughts towards his Majesty. *Cast all your care on him for he takes care of you*.<sup>5</sup> This is the frame of mind that is needed to make a good preparation for holy prayer. We should not be concerned about the things that distract the mind by thinking about what does not pertain to prayer. Indeed at such a time we should not think or care about useless things, nor even about necessary things such as food, clothes or the like but place all our hope in God *because he will take care of us*.

**5435** Finally St Paul says that we ought to adjust our focus according to each kind of prayer,<sup>6</sup> so that our attention is fixed on whatever the prayer is asking. This will prepare us for different kinds of holy prayer.

He also says: *But in all prayer* there is mystery just as theologians say that holy Mass is a sacred mystery, because it contains the mystery of our salvation in which many prayers are being offered for us. We should not attend Mass only on Feast Days but everyday and be concerned and careful<sup>7</sup> to do this, because this is so important that there is no other way to express it than by referring to Christ's words when he instituted it.

*But all prayer* is sacramental by nature similar to holy Confession and Communion which are real prayers in which soul and body are united<sup>8</sup> to Christ our Saviour and the pledge of our salvation: *he who eats this bread shall live forever*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Phil 2, 7. The last words *when praying* have been added.

<sup>2</sup> Phil 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> This concept comes from St Augustine, for example, *You were more intimate to me than my most intimate part and higher than my highest part*. (cf. *Confes.*, lib. III, c. 6: PL 32, 688).

<sup>4</sup> Phil 4, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cf 1 Pet 5, 7; Ps 54, 23 (*Vulg.*); Mt 6, 26.

<sup>6</sup> The text in the Vulgate reads: *Do not be solicitous about anything, but in everything make prayer and supplication* (cf. Phil 4, 6). The author has made his own interpretation in which he applies it to all types of prayers for various intentions.

<sup>7</sup> The text has *anise* but perhaps this means *ansiosa*.

<sup>8</sup> In the text *s' unisce*.

<sup>9</sup> Jn 6, 59.

**4536** *But in every prayer* give praise, especially in the Divine Office, in which the Psalms are the prayers offered by Angels. Such praise is so effective that it gives a taste of divine consolation to those who sing the psalms with mind and heart.<sup>1</sup>

*But in every prayer* speak words. This is the case when reciting the crowns, the rosary, the *Our Father*, the litanies and psalms, the Office of the Dead and other beautiful devotions which we do not need to invent<sup>2</sup> because they contain wisdom and simplicity. Whoever does not say these prayers is like a person who is negligent and does not care about his salvation.

*But every prayer* is mental prayer that consists in holy meditation and holy contemplation made up of thoughts that focus on God and the activities of our own hearts.<sup>3</sup>

*But every prayer* is ejaculatory prayer which is offered with good desires and emotion that is directed to God and with the holy intention of pleasing Christ. This goes beyond everything since holy God seems to allow himself to be wounded by the darts of good conscience and good will in such prayer.<sup>4</sup>

**4537** St Paul says: *But in everything let your petitions be made known to God in prayer* which is related to practice since every good work is prayer. However, this gives us a lot to think about since many have been deceived saying: “I perform good works and this is praying.”<sup>5</sup> In addition as soon as they finish the Divine Office and the Our Fathers sometimes they are not even concerned to assist at Mass saying that they will perform other good works. However such persons deserve to be given a severe warning, for as St Jerome says: “It is true that every good work is a prayer as long as this is not a contradiction. However, no good work should be undertaken without prayer, since whatever does not begin with God and end with God is evil.”<sup>6</sup>

So far we have spoken about the disposition to be cultivated when preparing to pray and how we need to rejoice in God, be modest, believe that God is really present, place all our care in his divine Majesty and recognise the kind of prayer that we are offering since our preparation should be in line with the kind of prayer that we are offering.<sup>7</sup> So that we may understand this we need to treat the actual process of preparation

**5438** “O God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit I adore, praise, thank and bless you who are most worthy of being adored, praised and blessed since you alone are not only perfect but your perfection is completely infinite, eternal and divine. I express my sorrow for all my ingratitude and sinfulness and I beg of you through the merits of your saints and especially of your glorious Mother the Immaculate Virgin Mary and through the merits of my Saviour Jesus Christ, your eternal Son and finally through your infinite strength that you deign to grant me the grace that this prayer which I am

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Francis *The First Letter to the Custodians* 6, FA;ED I p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Here the text is completely incomprehensible so we have added a verb to convey its likely meaning..

<sup>3</sup> Cf. above note 75.

<sup>4</sup> This concept is common among spiritual authors.

<sup>5</sup> According to the early Capuchin chroniclers this was the “argument” used by Bernardino Ochino. However the expression goes much further back in spiritual literature.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. St Jerome, *Ep. 130 ad Demetriadem*, n. 15 (PL 22, 1119).

<sup>7</sup> This is a summary of the chapter.

offering to you now may be performed to your honour and glory and that of all your saints in recognition of all your gifts and for the salvation of all the faithful. O Lord grant that my soul and mind be wrapped completely in you in faith with charity and hope. Grant<sup>1</sup> that this prayer will be fruitful and effective because your Majesty knows that it is necessary for our salvation *in saecula saeculorum*".

*Chapter Six, which deals with the second feature of prayer, namely devotion.*

**5439** There is no doubt among learned and intelligent people as well as among those who are simple and illiterate that prayer ought to be a matter of devotion. Therefore we shall deal with this subject over the course of four chapters which treat its cause, how it is preserved, how it may be lost and how it can be regained if lost.<sup>2</sup>

[*Definition of devotion*]

**4540** With regard to the first mentioned I say that holy theologians describe devotion by saying: *Devotion is the tenderness of heart by means of which a person easily performs each action with humility and mortification.*<sup>3</sup> From these words one understands that devotion is a quality which makes the heart tender and ready to perform<sup>4</sup> actions and works of virtue with humility.

They say secondarily: *Devotion is the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God.*<sup>5</sup> From what has been said in these words one can see that devotion is readiness of will to perform what is required by divine worship with a generous and energetic heart.

Thirdly they say that devotion is *the fervour of a well-disposed will where the mind cannot stop making certain information public.*<sup>6</sup> By these words we understand that devotion is a fervent good intention that rises within our soul because of which we cannot not declaring certain information openly... We see this clearly in persons who are diligently occupied with the things of God. However, what is the origin of such devotion?

[*The cause of devotion*]

**4541** I say that its main cause is the Holy Spirit, who is the inspiration of all good works. Therefore St Augustine says on this matter: *The love of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*<sup>7</sup> The workings of the Holy Spirit are what we experience within us when we are moved by devotion to

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<sup>1</sup> *Fornisca* in the text may be *finisca*.

<sup>2</sup> Here too the author shows how he wishes to follow the spirit of St Francis who wanted more than anything that his brothers possess "the spirit of prayer and devotion" (cf. RBN 5).

<sup>3</sup> *Devotio est teneritudo cordis quae quis de facili ad omnem actum humilem et mortificatum resolvitur.* Cf. *De spiritu et anima*, c. 50 (PL 40, 816).

<sup>4</sup> *Osservanze* here is *osservationi* in the text.

<sup>5</sup> *Devotio est promptitudo voluntatis ad ea quae Dei sunt exequendo vivaci animo.* Cf. St Thomas *Summa* II-II, q. 82, art 1, Responso.

<sup>6</sup> *Fervor bon[ae] voluntatis quem mens non valet cohibere certis inditiis manifestat exterius.* In the text *meus* appears instead of *mens*. For various definitions of "devotion" see, J. W. Curran, *Devotion*, in *DS* III, Paris 1954-57, 702-727, especially 726 where his sources are quoted.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rom 5, 5.



God.<sup>1</sup> St Jerome also says that the grace of the Holy Spirit brings about true compunction of heart within us so that we may have devotion to Christ.<sup>2</sup> St Bernard says that the Spirit of God is what causes us to experience so much devotion in our heart that we taste unspeakable sweetness.<sup>3</sup> St Bonaventure says that the devotion that we experience is real devotion when it comes from the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Therefore it is clear that that this is the main cause of devotion. Therefore Scripture says: *The Spirit of the Lord was their leader.*<sup>5</sup> Furthermore St Paul says that devotion is demanded by the Spirit when he says: *Do not extinguish the Spirit.*<sup>6</sup>

**4542** Material things such as the selection of holy places, holy relics, and visits to holy and devotional churches, looking at holy images reverently, paintings of Scriptural matters and the actions of the saints are the second cause of devotion. This also applies to speaking about God and his friends and of things which pertain to salvation and about holy examples,<sup>7</sup> and listening to the Divine Office. Better than all of these is listening to holy preaching, spiritual reading and the study of devout books that explain Sacred Scripture. All of these material things are a great cause of devotion.<sup>8</sup> However it should also be considered that we who become involved in these devotions must also be good soil. We have to bear fruit when we receive external things from God within ourselves. Let us not be thorny ground because of worldly considerations because this will suffocate devotion. Let us not be stony ground devoid of moisture because the sun of temptation will make us arid and dry. Let us not take the path of sensuality because the senses with their greed will trample devotions of this kind and the devils *will snatch the word from their hearts lest they be saved.*<sup>9</sup>

You may be amazed that these material things are so important that those who deny this or who are totally worldly or tepid or negligent are often dangerous or heretical, since faith, which is the greatest gift of God, comes through hearing and is necessary for salvation. St Paul says concerning hearing: *Faith comes through hearing; and hearing through the word of Christ.*<sup>10</sup>

**4543** Devotion is something that is necessary and adds something extra. If at first there is something material latter there may be something which is greater since the good God wishes that we come to know what is non-material and invisible through what is material as the Apostle Paul teaches us: *The invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made.*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Sermo. 378: In die Pentecostes* (PL 39, 1673).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Jerome, *Translatio libri Didymi de Sp. Sancto*, n. 17 (PL 23, 125); *Expositio in epist. As rom.*,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St Bernard, *Sermo I in festo Pent.*, n. 5-6; and *III*, n. 7; *Sermo. VII in Cant.*, 5-6 (PL 183, 325s, 333s, 812s).

<sup>4</sup> St Bonaventure, *DE sex alis Seraphim*, c. VII; *De sexta ala praelatorum quae est devotion ad deum*, 1-2 (*Op. omnia*, VIII, 147s).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Is 63, 14. – *doctor* in Scripture is *ductu* in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 1 tit 5, 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Edificanti* here is *edificatorii* in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Compare this with “the spiritual climate” in *Const.* 1536.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mt 13, 19; Mk 4, 15; Lk 8, 12. St Francis cited these passages from the Bible in more or less the same sense in ER 22, 13, FA:ED I, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 10, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 1, 20.

Therefore, I conclude that material things that are well understood are the cause of devotion.

The third cause of devotion is the memory of divine things that is when they are frequently brought to mind especially when we recall God's blessings. Therefore David says: *I remembered God and was delighted.*<sup>1</sup> My soul will not only be delighted but it will repent. Therefore the prophet says: *I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me.*<sup>2</sup>

However we should especially recall Christ as his Majesty teaches us through the Prophet: *Remember my poverty which was wormwood and the gall.*<sup>3</sup> St Paul says: *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.*<sup>4</sup>

**4544** In addition also thinks of the lives of the saints as St Paul says: *who by faith and patience were made worthy of redemption.*<sup>5</sup> Furthermore the devout contemplative says God remembers someone who is just. It is a great thing that someone who often remembers God on earth is remembered by God. Therefore I say that remembering God achieves great things. Therefore whoever wished to become devout should often recall what has been said above.

The fourth cause of devotion is thinking with the mind that is calling to mind God or his gifts, or Christ or his Mother or his saints and considering and meditating on these things since during such mediation the mind presents them to the will which becomes enflamed by the presentation of the great facts which they contain as David implied when he said: *I meditated on your commandments. Your judgements were my counsel. I meditated on your commandments which I loved.*<sup>6</sup>

**4545** The fifth cause of devotion is an act of our will which when the intellect is enlightened by the light of God's truth it becomes aroused and enthused to such a degree that we are persuaded to decide to adopt the good plan that the will has before it and if we do not choose this we do not possess devotion. Indeed I say that the fundamental truth on which we base our choice<sup>7</sup> is the main cause of devotion.

In addition to this we ought to know that there are four kinds of devotion; the first produces desire, the second elation, the third is fruitful and the fourth is evil.

By means of the first a person is focused on divine things with great eagerness and feeling and desires nothing but to put divine matters into practice. Often this makes a person forget other individual things and despise earthly matters as happened to St Paul: *I countered all things as dung that I might gain Christ.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 76, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Lam 3, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Lam 3, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Heb 12, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Heb 11, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ps 118, 24. 47. 77. 174 (Vulg).

<sup>7</sup> *Liciti* in the text = *elatici* that is something that is willed and forms the basis of a decision to act.

<sup>8</sup> Phil 3, 8. – This kind of devotion is classified as “that of desire”. It is reminiscent of a spiritual work that was wide-spread in the sixteenth century: *Il desideroso: Specchio della vita religiosa, nel quale si tratta di uno chiamato Desideroso, che andava cercando la via di andare alla vita eternal, et a qual modo egli la trovò*, Venezia 1549.

**4546** The second kind of devotion is that which produces elation and it occurs when a person feels delight and consolation and it seems like a thousand years before he can hurry to pray. However, such elation is not sensual since he still delights in praying even during tribulation and at that time his whole person experiences consolation.<sup>1</sup>

The third kind of devotion produces fruitful effects. This happens when a person is so possessed by zeal, the honour of God and divine worship and that of the saints that the person seems to be beside himself. When he eats, sleeps, works or performs exercises he always speaks, thinks and puts his hand to carrying out divine things and wants to die for Christ a thousand times over and do what pleases God. However the true sign of devotion appears when the person despises the things of the world. If he happens to be a lay person and is obliged to work he nevertheless does this so mechanically that he regards divine worship and spiritual things as above all temporal delight and pleasure. When a person is not like this he does not really possess devotion.<sup>2</sup>

**4547** The fourth kind of devotion is called pretentious and this can happen in many ways.

Firstly it may be pretentious when a person pretends to be devout and holy and conducts himself like a saint in his external gestures and actions and speech, in dress and ceremonies. However later on he is wicked because he has done those things to attract praise and once he recognises that he has been deceived by the praise that he had expected he becomes insolent.

Secondly defective devotion may take place through scruples when a person is so scrupulous that everything appears to be a sin and he is scandalised by the slightest thing. Such persons often develop such lack of judgement that they do not please God, the Saints or men and become a nuisance to themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly defective devotion may be diabolical when the devil lets us see what appear to be good things. However, because of our ignorance once he has made us shed tears and sighs and enjoy them very much, he leads us to a cliff-face as he has already done to many heretics, apostates and others who have caused and are causing thousands of evils.

**4548** This kind of devotion may also be lukewarm when a person puts aside the things of God for the slightest reason and has little regard for inner spiritual worship and is satisfied with not doing evil and not neglecting ordinary things saying: “I would have prayed had I not been prevented by such and such a set of circumstances or work”. Often he wants to wander about<sup>4</sup> and himself create impediments. Such persons forget how to pray and hardly make the sign of the cross at night. Because he lacks inner devotion he goes in search of external delights, pleasures and company. This is very dangerous since once they find themselves distracted to such a degree they despise those who withdraw and say: “Do all things with discretion.”

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<sup>1</sup> Today we would say that such persons had a taste for prayer.

<sup>2</sup> These signs of true devotion are well described in *The Art of Union* by Giovanni da Fano.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the danger of scruples see Giovanni da Fano *The Art of Union*, chapter 8 *Concerning Dangerous Scrupulosity of Heart*.

<sup>4</sup> The text here is not very clear where it says *andar vagando cose*.

This kind of devotion can also be performed in a hurry which happens when a person wants to act and speak, pray and fast and do bitter acts of penance immediately. These things will pass away quickly, as is often said, with a rush.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of devotion may be totally preoccupied with objects of the senses as is the case with some people when they hear bells ring, the singing of hymns, psalms and other spiritual musical items. Although these things are necessary and those who do not want to have them are heretics,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless St Augustine says that devotion that is based exclusively on objects of the senses is dangerous.<sup>3</sup>

**4549** In addition devotion may be prompted by curiosity when a person either wishes to know the secrets of God so that they can talk about them or to know them when this is not necessary.

Devotion may also be prompted by superstition when a person would rather pray in one place in preference to another, or in a certain place rather than in another place, or following one procedure rather than another.

Devotion may also be prompted by pride when a person boasts about the books, rosaries, crosses which have been decorated with silk or something similar.<sup>4</sup> This is especially the case with women. Decoration of such objects should be carried out for the honour and glory of God and not for any other reason.

**4550** In conclusion, then, we should totally detach ourselves from defective devotion. However for the present I think we should be aware that devotion can easily be lost where there are too many exercises or prayers<sup>5</sup> and too many different activities. Each one has to arrange things so that the exercises do not take up so much time that the soul loses the treasure of devotion in which the soul takes hold of God and God takes hold of the soul. This can be lost through the distractions we create through amusements and especially through a multiplicity of venial sins that cause us to lose fervour and devotion.<sup>6</sup> However it is mortal sin that is the main cause of loss of devotion. Therefore Scripture says: *fell from sin as from the face of a serpent.*<sup>7</sup> Once devotion has been lost and a person tries to regain it there is no better way than holy Confession and Communion and a holy silence during which the person does not readily speak about worldly matters especially frivolous things. Thus it will be retained by going from one good thing to another. Once I heard a good man saying: “The loss of devotion is the ruin of a Christian religious because devotion is his real strength, since by holding this in his heart his mind will be more easily enlightened by the light of truth which produces devotion. When you have lost it try to regain it by means of the things that cause devotion.”

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<sup>1</sup> These observations are based on great experience. In a different context they have already been said by St Therese of the Child Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> This is the problem concerning “ceremonies” which is also raised by Bernardino Ochino.

<sup>3</sup> See for example St Augustine *Ep.2* (*PL* 33, 63), c. 3-5 (*PL* 39, 1635-1655).

<sup>4</sup> The *Constitutions of 1536* also draw attention to these small details concerning pride – *Constit* 1536 n. 23, 31, 140, 144 etc. *Alb.*, n. 16, 27, 61 etc.

<sup>5</sup> Here the word used is *dispersione* whereas the text has *disperatione*.

<sup>6</sup> This is very true and it was noted also in in the Capuchin booklets on the Rule where they spoke about *the ten dangers that brought about venial sin* (cf. *Regola e Testamento*, Venezia 1597, f 120v-121r).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Sir* 21, 2.

To bring this chapter to an end,<sup>1</sup> I say that devotion is necessary for holy prayer so that when a person does not have devotion he will gain nothing and many times he will be an abomination before God.

*Chapter seven, which deals with the third feature of prayer namely attention.*

**4551** From His teaching and by what He said regarding good works we may see clearly how important paying attention was to the Majesty of our Saviour. “Take heed that you do not do your good works before men, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven”.<sup>2</sup> He explained paying attention at prayer when he criticised<sup>3</sup> the prayer of the Pharisees saying: “*This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore attention must be rooted in the heart and is so necessary if prayer is to be pleasing to God that without praying would be like having fire without heat which would not be fire. Thus prayer without attention would not be prayer.

[*Definition of attention*]

**4552** I think that it is better that I define attention now. I say (leaving aside various definitions) that it is *very pure, tranquil stillness of mind, focusing on the objective of prayer by means of which God becomes dear to the person praying*. In saying this we mean that attention is nothing else but a firm and tenacious stillness of mind and tranquillity in the one who is at prayer who is focused on the purpose of prayer through which he pleases God. Reflect that it takes tranquil stillness so that attention may offer consolation and make the one who is praying experience great delight so that he may be pleasing to God. Think of how beneficial it is if a person remains pleasing to God.<sup>5</sup>

However saintly theologians put a question asking if attention is necessary for prayer. Among others the Angelic Doctor, St Thomas has replied: “Something is necessary when the business or activity<sup>6</sup> is more easily attained because of it; and thus attention is absolutely necessary for prayer.” The effects of prayer cannot be produced without attention and so we state that it is necessary.

[*Three effects of prayer*]

**4553** Prayer has three effects.

The first is to merit eternal life. This effect is common to all good works which are performed out of active charity and faith. Prayer produces the same effect when it is launched with attention. I emphasise the beginning because although the mind may wander during prayer nevertheless the strength of initial attention makes the whole

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<sup>1</sup> *Fornire* in the text is an ancient version of *finire*.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 6, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Exprobando* here, in the text *biasimando*.

<sup>4</sup> Mt 15, 8; Mk 7, 6.

<sup>5</sup> To explain the importance of attention during prayer modern authors say that “praying means concentrating”. Cf. for example, Père Paul de la Croix, *La Pulie et la Source. Les voies de la prière silencieuse*, Saint-Maurice (Suisse) 1982, 67-72.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Summa theologica* II, II, q. 83, a. 13.

prayer meritorious. It also does this with all other acts that are performed out of charity.

The second effect of prayer is to ask for whatever we need from our generous God. This should be kept in mind by means of conscious attention not only at the beginning but throughout prayer, since without such attention prayer will not be pleasing to God. Nonetheless if the mind wanders or goes off on a tangent it will not be displeasing but it will not be effective and it will be a useless petition.

The third effect of prayer is a certain sweetness of mind that a person experiences on many levels while praying. The first level is spiritual relish, the second is paying God honour, the third is honouring the Saints, the fourth is the salvation of souls, where this is the fruit of what we ask in prayer. Attention is required for such prayer since without it prayer will be fruitless as St Paul says: *If I pray with the tongue, the intelligence will remain fruitless.*<sup>1</sup>

[*Three feature of attention*]

**4554** Now we shall consider how the sacred theologians assign three features to attention at prayer. They say that the first feature is present while actually praying; the second feature is virtually present during prayer even if the mind wanders, and the third feature is present when there is the habit of praying.

Let us speak about the habitual feature of prayer first. I say that this is always necessary as is the case with other virtues. For example, every Christian must necessarily possess the habit of charity which disposes him to perform good works of charity. It is necessary to have the habit of active faith which disposes the intellect to acts of the Christian religion. The same could be said of the other virtues. In this regard we say that it is necessary for those who want to pray to cultivate the habit of praying which will dispose them to pray. This habit is acquired by frequent acts, that is by praying frequently so that the habit which disposes one to pray is developed with respect to times and places until it becomes easy to pray to God. This habit is necessary and it produces habitual attention.

Actual attention at prayer occurs while the person is actually praying and is thinking about nothing else, has nothing on his mind and does not move or do anything else except pray. He is actually concentrating, feeling and experiencing what he is doing. This is necessary at the beginning of all prayer and without it prayer would not be meritorious. If while praying the mind should wander out of weakness, and when we become aware of this it is very displeasing,<sup>2</sup> and we still return to our resolve to pray, then this is undoubtedly meritorious. This is what St Basil says.<sup>3</sup>

**4555** Virtual attention depends on habitual attention and actual attention in this way. When one has the intention, inclination and determined wish to pray and has begun to pray and still perseveres in praying as he initially intended to do and completes all the parts of prayer even if<sup>4</sup> he loses actual attention he will never lose virtual attention and by means of this he will perform all the actions that pertain to actual attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 14, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Accorgendosi, avvedendosi molto dispiace.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St Basil *Reg. brevius tracta*, interr. 278 (PG 31, 1278 D).

<sup>4</sup> *Eziandio* in the text = *anche se*,

This is also necessary because when the mind wanders the power of virtual attention will alert you<sup>1</sup> and warn you to gather your wandering mind back to the prayer that you have started. How can you prevent the mind from straying and wandering? I say that this is impossible through human effort if there is not a special grace of God. It is true that by means of holy practices a person can acquire tranquillity of mind,<sup>2</sup> as we read was the case with many who took up the practice, and with God's help acquired this virtue. However, St Basil says that a person must practice continually otherwise he will not acquire such devout attention.<sup>3</sup> What David said is good advice for making you attentive at prayer and equipping yourself against the dangers and providing for them<sup>4</sup> with God's help. He said: *I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved.*<sup>5</sup> Furthermore regarding attention he said: *My eyes are ever towards the Lord for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.*<sup>6</sup> In these words the royal prophet is saying that he always possessed actual attention by means of divine assistance when he went to holy prayer.

However, poor us, since there are few who frequent prayer! This means that when we sometimes want to pray we have no taste for it nor is it fruitful.

Thus I conclude by saying that well prepared prayer requires attention which Christ can give us.<sup>7</sup>

*Chapter eight which deals with the fourth feature of prayer, the appropriate time.*

**4556** Since we are dealing with the appropriate time for prayer we ought to note that the divine essence had no beginning, was not produced, made or created but is eternal.

Angels, the heavenly sphere, prime matter and time are said to exist perpetually because only they were produced and created at the beginning. All creatures and the world is said to be temporal because they were created in time and not by any other spirits.

This is why eternal things have no beginning or end while perpetual things have a beginning but no end and temporal things have a beginning and an end. Thus only the divine Majesty is eternal, an angel perpetual and man and other things are temporal. This describes their movement and rest.

It follows from this that our prayer is not eternal even though the one to whom we pray is the eternal God, nor is it perpetual even though the angels who offer our prayers to God are perpetual. Our prayer, therefore, is something that is temporal and consequently<sup>8</sup> our Saviour says that it is necessary that we pray at all times<sup>9</sup> and time is the measure of motion and rest. Therefore, as we observe that just as Mother Nature

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<sup>1</sup> *Si* in the text = *ti*.

<sup>2</sup> This is the main problem with the practice of prayer as it is required in the various prescriptions of the early Constitutions of the Order.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St Basil *Hom. In illud: Attende tibi ipsi*, n. 2-5 (PG 32, 1123).

<sup>4</sup> The text reads: *proveder I pericoli e provedersi*.

<sup>5</sup> Ps 15, 8 (*Vulg.*); Acta 2, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ps 24, 15 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>7</sup> *Ne* in the text = *ci*.

<sup>8</sup> *Che* here is *benché* in the text.

<sup>9</sup> Lk 18, 1.

has partitioned time in such a way that there is a time to plant, a time to pluck up that which is planted, a time to speak and a time to keep silent, a time to sleep and a time to keep watch,<sup>1</sup> so there is an appropriate time for everything and a time that is not appropriate for some things. Considering this we see that not all time are appropriate for prayer, nor is prayer suitable at just any time. Thus as natural things are spread over different times so are spiritual things.<sup>2</sup>

[*Sunday*]

**4557** Because it is dedicated to the divine Majesty Sunday is the most worthy time for prayer. This is why we are commanded to make this day holy.<sup>3</sup> Making this day holy consists in offering inner worship such as knowing God with the intellect as being true, recognising Him with the will as the highest good, recalling Him with the memory as our greatest benefactor, accepting Him, blessing and thanking Him with our whole soul and praying that He will grant us the seven petitions that are contained in the Lord's Prayer.

Secondly, it consists in external worship. That is attending Church, assisting at Mass, listening to talks on sacred things and sermons, attending the Divine Office. It consists in not doing servile or manual work, or asking others to do it. The generous God requires they we sanctify this day in this manner with great diligence and wondrous attention and He wants it to be kept inviolably.

[*The solemnity of Jesus Christ*]

**4558** Other times that are most suitable for prayer are the Solemnities of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Transfiguration, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. During these Solemnities we ought to be more careful to celebrate because this is a more appropriate time to pray. At such times in addition to interior and exterior divine worship we have a greater opportunity to recall God's great kindness in taking flesh at the Incarnation and assuming our laborious condition for love of us. At the Nativity He demonstrated His benevolence. At the Circumcision He proclaimed our salvation by taking the name Jesus. At the Epiphany He showed the mystery of the Three Kings when He wished to appear as priest, mortal and a most majestic King. At His Baptism and Transfiguration He appeared as the Son of the Eternal Father who has come to wash us in baptism so that we might be prepared for eternal glory. In the Passion He showed the great mercy through which He wanted to save us by shedding His blood. In the Resurrection He wanted to show how He had conquered our enemies. In the Ascension He showed how He took possession of being at the Father's right hand. At Pentecost He showed His great love.

These are the best times to pray since by considering these events we become filled with gratitude to God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Qo (Ecclesiastes) 3, 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Note the author's ability and the originality to apply scholastic principles to the subject of prayer.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Es 20, 8; Deut 5, 12. To value the Lord's Day as a special time for prayer is a most practical consideration.

<sup>4</sup> In practice this is liturgical spirituality during the various celebration of the mystery that is Christ.



[Feasts of the Madonna]

**4559** The third most opportune times for prayer are the Solemnities of the Virgin Mary, during which, in addition to divine worship, as we have said, we come to know the great mysteries of our salvation. Celebrating her conception we come to know the great choice that God made of the vessel that was most worthy of being chosen to be the Mother of God and our Advocate. At the Nativity we come to know how the great universal joy appeared *as the new light*.<sup>1</sup> At the Presentation we come to know how God wished to have His Mother dedicated to divine worship from her childhood. At the betrothal we come to know how God wanted to have the Incarnation honoured in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In the Annunciation we come to know the great humility of Mary and of the Divine Word which was demonstrated in her acceptance: *be it done to me according to your word*,<sup>2</sup> and in the Word when He clothed himself in flesh: *and the word became flesh*.<sup>3</sup> In the Visitation we come to know the revelation of a new mystery being made known to the world. In the Assumption we come to know the coronation of the Mother of God in heaven.

These are time when people have a real opportunity to praise God's majesty.<sup>4</sup>

[Feasts of Saints]

**4560** The fourth time when it is worth praying is on the feasts of the Saints during which we have a great opportunity to give ourselves to holy prayer. The manner in which we ought to become engaged in divine worship on the feast days of the Saints is no different to what we would do on the other days that have already been mentioned. There is only one difference and that is that on those days we consider the Creator, the Redeemer and the Queen of the world, whereas on the days of the Saints rather than<sup>5</sup> considering divine worship we focus on three things. Firstly, we consider the life, actions and conduct of the saints which we should imitate. Secondly we invoke the saints so that they may intercede for us before God. Thirdly we ask God to bestow the merits of the saints on us so that He may grant us the grace to be pleasing to His Majesty in the way that they were pleasing to Him, so that His divine Majesty might assist us through their merits.

But I tell you that when the saints should be honoured in their special feasts, it would appear that they are more dishonoured than honoured on their feasts than at other times. It is the will of God that the same thing does not happen on the Solemnities of the Virgin Mary, Christ or the great God because it is clear that on the feasts of the Saints the majority of Christians do not rise to the occasion but carry out profanations of irreligious life as it seems that the solemnity of the spirit has been turned into a solemnity of pomp, vanity, banquets, festivities, dancing and amusements and other illicit, mercenary and commercial events. They go to the Church on solemnities and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Is 9, 2; Mt 4, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Lk 1, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 1, 14.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the Catholic tradition we have a clear statement here of a position that is opposed to Protestantism as is also the case later with respect to the evaluation of the cult of the saints.

<sup>5</sup> *Più del = oltre di*.

think nothing about God and turn the opportune time for prayer into the vilest acts of sin, thus God says: *My soul hates your new moons, and your solemnities.* <sup>1</sup>

[*Three ceremonial occasions for prayer*]

**5461** The second time-related aspect of prayer is associated with ceremonies on three occasions which have been acknowledged throughout the history of the Church. The first is when the Divine Office is celebrated. This is composed of nine canonical hours which Holy Church celebrates as representing the seven gifts which are received from the Holy Spirit.

The second is the celebration of Holy Mass each morning which according to Canon Law cannot be celebrated at any other time.<sup>2</sup>

The third is when we normally say prayer in the morning or the evening as takes place in all Religious Institutes as laid down in all their Rules as a time for prayer as is confirmed by the Church as this is a very suitable time for prayer.

[*Time for vocal and mental prayer*]

**5462** The third time for prayer is for the devotion of vocal prayer and this has no limits because a person can perform this at whatever time seems best to him according to his convenience or need as long as he does not omit it since he would then forget the heavenly and divine mysteries.

The fourth time is the time for mental prayer and this takes place when a person is best prepared for it. However, the greater the quiet at this time the more fruitful will contemplation be. Thus it seems to me that when a person wishes to undertake this kind of prayer his main preparation should be to choose a time that is appropriate and convenient, perhaps at night or when he is certain that he will not be disturbed.<sup>3</sup>

[*Preparation for prayer*]

**4563** The other time, which is the fifth, is called the time of preparation for prayer. This is the same as saying that when you go to Confession or Communion you should make a good preparation since such a great mystery requires maximum preparation. A person who approaches Confession or Communion without preparation is like someone who eats raw or over-cooked meat which is without any true taste or tenderness.<sup>4</sup>

Preparatory time for prayer will be fruitful if when a person is going to recite the Divine Office he spends time beforehand in making his mind attentive and devout. Preparatory time for prayer can be in the evening or in the morning. One prepares oneself in the morning by should not offend God during the day in all his actions. At night he reviews the faults he has committed during the day, preparing himself for death which could occur during the night. Thus St Bernard says: "When I pray in the

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<sup>1</sup> Is 1, 14. This is a very effective page that reflects the strong and zealous tone of Silvestro da Rossano's preaching when reforming such Christians.

<sup>2</sup> Today evening Masses are also permitted.

<sup>3</sup> This is a very important observation.

<sup>4</sup> This principle states that spiritual activities ought to be prepared for by praying.

morning I prepare myself to live correctly and when I pray at night I prepare myself for a happy death".<sup>1</sup>

[*Prosperity, adversity and sin*]

**4564** The sixth time for prayer is the time of prosperity which is the most dangerous time that a person could ever experience when he enjoys a wealth of health, riches, and honours and is finally in the grace of God. It is most necessary to pray at such a time for it is easy for a person to lose such prosperity and strike unbelievable calamity. At such a time a person will appear not to be frightened by anything. However, as St Jerome says, it is then that he should be frightened for as St Paul says: *Let he who stands take heed lest he fall.*<sup>2</sup>

The seventh time is when a person is undergoing adversity. He should then pray with great fervour because when adversity is not accompanied by prayer it will appear bitter and insurmountable. However, with prayer it will appear sweet and gentle. God will accompany those who pray in adversity and affliction saying what David said: *I am with him in tribulation. He shall cry to me, and I shall be with him.*<sup>3</sup> Being aware of this through experience the Prophet said: *Give us help from trouble!*<sup>4</sup>

The eighth time for prayer is when a person realises that he has fallen into sin or is in danger of sinning or is suffering great temptation. Then he should cry: *Save me, O God for the waters have come in even to my soul. I stick fast in the mire of the deep and there is no sure standing.*<sup>5</sup> Indeed in this situation we ought to pray with tears and sighs as did St Jerome.<sup>6</sup>

[*Dynamic and ejaculatory prayer*]

**4565** Another occasion for prayer is when action is demanded as when we speak about good works. This should continue through our whole life which should always be adorned with fruitful works which should never be missing according to what the Apostle St Paul said; *Let us not fail in doing good works, for in due time we shall reap without fail.*<sup>7</sup>

The tenth and final occasion for prayer has to do with ejaculatory prayer. This should be almost continual as when we have good intentions and desires to do what is pleasing to the Divine Majesty, when we wish to please God. A person ought to become accustomed to doing this since virtuous actions come about through habit which prepares the mind more easily for both mental and vocal prayer and every kind of prayer.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. a thought something like this in St Bernard *Serm. 86 in Cant.* N. 3 (PL 183, 1196).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 12. The Latin text reads: *itaque qui se existimat stare videat ne cadat.*

<sup>3</sup> Ps 90, 15 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>4</sup> Ps 59,13; 107, 13 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>5</sup> Ps 68, 2-3 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>6</sup> As the Saint says in *Ep xxii ad Eustochium*, n. 7 (PL 22, 398s).

<sup>7</sup> Gal 6, 9.

<sup>8</sup> The importance and the practice of ejaculations are elements of a pious life that are emphasised by the early Capuchin spiritual writers as we have already noted.

Thus we have dealt with the fourth occasion of prayer that is called the time of prayer. It is certainly a gift of God with no other purpose than the acquisition of eternal salvation. Holy men knew well how to plan time in their lives even those who lived in the world, in such a way that they were always aware of Christ.

*Chapter nine, which deals with the fifth feature of prayer, namely how it ought to be carried out in a suitable environment.*

**5566** God our eternal and immortal Majesty situated everything in its proper place outside of which it could neither live nor be fruitful. Fish can neither live nor operate out of water. A tree can neither live nor be fruitful out of the ground. On the other hand<sup>1</sup> in the right place they both live and produce fruit. Thus with respect to prayer it is necessary that it be performed in a proper environment, otherwise it will not produce fruit.

[*God's environment is God*]

**4567** With regard as to which is the proper environment for prayer we should note that God is everywhere and where God is that is the right place to pray. However we need to consider that God is not in a place the same way as an Angel is in a place. An Angel can only be in one place and not in another. God is not in a place as man is in a place. Man is confined within the confines of the place. God is not confined to the boundaries of a place,<sup>2</sup> as are the heavens and the other elements. Holy God is in every place with infinite eminence and divine existence. Thus He is in every place by His essence, presence, power and wisdom. He is also beyond every place.<sup>3</sup>

First of all I say that He is in every place by His essence because everything that possesses existence exists more in God than in themselves. He is in every part of them by means of His presence because no creature is unknown to God. I say that He is there by His power because no creature can separate itself from the Divine Majesty except through the deliberate human wickedness according to what has been written: *Salvation is far from sinners*<sup>4</sup>, and in another place: *they that go far from you shall perish*.<sup>5</sup> I say that He is in them through wisdom since it is through this that He orders, organizes and provides for everything by means of his power.

[*Environments selected by God*]

**4568** Because God is everywhere it follows that one can and ought to pray everywhere. St Paul teaches us to raise pure hands to God everywhere.<sup>6</sup> However we need to consider that although God is everywhere, nevertheless his Majesty chose certain places for prayer. At times he chose mountains, as we read concerning Abraham, Moses and Elias.<sup>7</sup> After that He prescribed a sanctuary, which was

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<sup>1</sup> Here the editor shows his lack of understanding of what the author meant. When it should be *al contrario* he wrote "...né fa frutto. Alcuno all'incontro ...".

<sup>2</sup> That is God is not confined by space.

<sup>3</sup> This is the tradition scholastic summary of God's immensity.

<sup>4</sup> Ps 118, 155 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>5</sup> Ps 72, 22 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 2, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gen 22; Ex. 19, 3; 31, 18 etc.; 1Kg 19, 8ss.

surrounded by a wall within the temple, for the ark. He also prescribed the holy temple where not only did holy men pray but God himself was present displaying His great strength in many places. What I intend to say is that in the broad picture the place of prayer is the Church and this is so important that when David was speaking about it he said: *I have loved. O Lord, the beauty of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.* <sup>1</sup> Thus the Church is the place which God has chosen. David meant to say that this is God's beautiful dwelling and the place where His glory lives. Christ says clearly: *My house is a house of prayer.* <sup>2</sup>

However coming down to detail we need to remember that there are some places of prayer in the Church where there are holy relics, devout images and especially the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and in such places one may pray with special feelings of devotion.

There are also other special places in homes where it is fitting for people to pray. These rooms are decorated with very devout objects similar to what devout Judith did who built an oratory in her house after her husband had died.<sup>3</sup>

Other such places are intentionally built as oratories such as the places where Confraternities gather to say the Office and take the discipline and practice mental prayer, such as in Florence and many other places.<sup>4</sup>

[*Spiritual environments of prayer*]

**4569** Those who do not enjoy the comfort of a place to pray should pray where best they can. If they may lose the taste for prayer so that their soul experience no satisfaction in prayer they should go to Churches where the environment is a great help towards devotion.<sup>5</sup>

However speaking about the spiritual environment of prayer I say that this environment is in our heart and will which are not greatly assisted by holy places or decorated churches, or private oratories if the heart is full of vanity and does not pray diligently.<sup>6</sup>

Thus our Saviour Jesus Christ said: "when you want to pray, enter into your chamber, and having shut the door, pray to your Father in secret".<sup>7</sup> The secret room is our heart where God will certainly be found. The closed door is our cravings which have to be closed to all passion and evil sensuality. This is the place where we pray to God. This

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 25, 8 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>2</sup> Lk 19, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Judith 8, 5.

<sup>4</sup> These were oratories set up by Confraternities where they could carry out their devotions and practices of piety.

<sup>5</sup> In the text the concept is confused. Probably the editor did not read the manuscript well and left out some words.

<sup>6</sup> This is a most beautiful thought that reminds us of the famous saying of St Francis concerning the "interior cell". "Brother Body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit that remains inside the cell to pray to god and meditate. If the soul does not remain in quiet and solitude in its cell, a cell made by hands does little good to a religious." (*The Assisi Compilation* 108, FA: ED II, p. 215). This concept is also connected to the Eastern concept of "the heart's dwelling".

<sup>7</sup> Mt 6, 6.

is why His Majesty says: *You shall find me when you seek me with all your heart.*<sup>1</sup> St Augustine says that you can look in many places but none is as good for prayer as your own heart where God's Majesty speaks to you.<sup>2</sup> Oh what a place this is, so suitable for prayer!

Just as physical places are holy, decorated, clean, have lamps that are alight, beautiful floors, pictures, relics and the sacraments so too the heart of the one who prays should be the same.

[*The ornaments of the heart*]

**4570** Firstly, places for prayer are holy. Your heart too should be made holy by means of divine grace. You should make every effort to see to it that it is holy and that holiness finds a place in your heart. God will do His part. St Peter says that God offers you his grace.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, places for prayer are decorated. Your heart should also be decorated with the holy virtues that were in Christ. Places for prayer are clean you, too, should *cleanse your heart from evil.*<sup>4</sup> Places for prayer have lighted lamps. You should light the faculties of your soul with Christ's truth. The Apostle says: *enlighten the eyes of your heart.*<sup>5</sup>

Places for prayer are decorated with drapes. Your heart too must select drapes and be ready to do what pleases God: *Prepare your hearts for the Lord.*<sup>6</sup>

Places of prayer have images and your heart must have the image of Christ's truth. St Paul says that we should always carry about the mortification of Christ so that his life is manifest in us.<sup>7</sup>

Places of prayer have the relics of the saints. Your heart must have spiritual relics which are the living example of the saints since this is the reason why God enabled us to have relics so that by recalling the saints we can follow their example in our life.

The Sacrament is in the place where we pray. Your heart must be a sacrament that is a mind made holy by frequenting holy Confession and Communion.

**4571** These examples based on material places teach us how we should prepare the spiritual place of our heart. There ought to be an approximate similarity between both places. The spiritual places should be cleared frequently according to what the Lord said: *My house is the house of prayer.*<sup>8</sup> This can apply to the soul which should be a house of prayer. As Christ chased brute animals out of the temple and also illegal businessmen to make the place pleasing to God we should often rid our soul of sin which is worse than the filthiest animals. We should often cleanse ourselves of evil

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 29, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *De magistro*, ch 1, n. 2 (PL 32, 1195); *Enarr. In ps. 3*, n. 4 (PL36, 74; *in ps. 141*, n. 3 (PL 37, 1834) etc.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Pet 1, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jer 4, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Eph 1, 18

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam 7, 3.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor 4, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Lk 19, 46; Is 56, 7.

thoughts which maliciously breed evil deeds and derive advantage from them. Just as Christ took up scourges and cleared and purified the temple,<sup>1</sup> we ought to take up the scourges of penance and alms so that thus purified a person can pray to God sincerely.

Remember that when Susanna found that she had entered into her heart as a place in which God was placated her prayer was heard.<sup>2</sup> This was also the case with Magdalene and many other holy persons. Therefore I say by way of concluding this chapter that two places are required for prayer, one being spiritual and the other physical.

*Chapter ten: which deals with the intrinsic features of prayer*

**4572** After dealing with the extrinsic features of prayer it now seems to me to be in order to speak about the extrinsic features of prayer. So the following ten points are what I have been able to glean from Saint Bernard, the Carthusian and St Bonaventure and many other serious writers.<sup>3</sup>

1. The first feature is to pray humbly, that is with humility, which will happen when we do not presume to trust in our own merits, strength or virtue. Indeed we ought to humble ourselves profoundly before the Divine Majesty, regarding ourselves as being wholeheartedly most vile since it is written: *The prayer of him who humbles himself will pierce the clouds.*<sup>4</sup> David said: *He has regard for the prayer of the humble: and does not despise their petition.*<sup>5</sup> This is following the example of Christ and of His saints whose lives were filled with humility.

2. The second feature is to pray with faith. This means having absolute faith because St Paul says: *He that comes to God must believe that he is.*<sup>6</sup> Saint James says: *Let him ask in faith, not wavering.*<sup>7</sup> As we have said above<sup>8</sup> faith enlightens prayer.

3. The third feature is to pray with charity. This happens when a person prays for no other reason than for the glory of God and His saints, to promote the good of the universal Church, to promote his own salvation and the salvation of his brother, since this objective is absolutely charitable and so nothing is missing. Thus when a person prays with such charity he is totally enflamed with divine love and this spreads to the entire mystical body.

**4573** 4. The fourth feature is to pray with confidence, that is placing all our hope in God taking care that such hope is not presumptuous which would be the case if we thought that we were worthy when we were unworthy, or when we judged ourselves to be just when we were not, or holy when we were sinners. When we sin let us ask for grace. When we have no sorrow for our faults and expect to receive mercy and make no effort to win the prize,. St Augustine says that this is presumption rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jn 2, 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Dan 13, 35.

<sup>3</sup> These are sources which the author uses. The "Carthusian" is Denis the Carthusian (+ 1471).

<sup>4</sup> Sir 35, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ps 101, 18 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>6</sup> Heb 11, 6.

<sup>7</sup> James 1, 6.

<sup>8</sup> See above notes 43-44.

confidence.<sup>1</sup> There are many who fall into this vice when they promise to pray for others presuming that they are better than them. All our hope should be based upon God and not on ourselves, as the Apostle says: *So that we do not rely on ourselves but on God.*<sup>2</sup>

5. The fifth feature is to pray with reverence and this happens when we have the fear of God which disposes us to be reverent in body and soul. If we do otherwise we will bring<sup>3</sup> rage upon ourselves because of our irreverence. If we have fear and reverence we will do what is pleasing to the Divine Majesty and most beneficial to ourselves. That is why the wise man says: *He that fears God will do good, and he that possesses justice will lay hold of her. And she will meet him as an honourable mother.*<sup>4</sup>

**4574** 6. The sixth feature is to pray with diligence and this happens when we pay attention as we have said above.<sup>5</sup> This sort of attention happens within us when our mind is occupied with nothing else except what we are praying about. Thus we should be diligent about knowing how to use time, place, method, material and the type of prayer. We are also exercising diligence when we think about the type of prayer that we are saying.<sup>6</sup> Let us be diligent at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of holy prayer.

7. The seventh feature is to pray with good judgement which involves using a great deal of discretion. This takes place when a person does not attempt doing more than he is able to do. When a person tries to do things without discretion, such as not wanting to take what he needs by way of food or sleep but wants to pray all the time, he will develop such weakness of mind<sup>7</sup> and strength and sometimes may go mad. Sometimes he may withdraw from what is necessary and from recreation and lose devotion to such an extent that he will have no relish for prayer. Therefore sound judgement is required in order to make prayer well thought-out.

8. The eighth feature is to pray robustly, that is to adopt violence against the suggestions of the enemy, because if you do not act with violence you will end up without the fruit of or the taste for prayer.<sup>8</sup> The adversaries go around roaring like lions,<sup>9</sup> to make you lose the spiritual benefit that you want. At times they make your head ache; sometimes they make your limbs ache. Sometimes they make you sleep excessively; sometimes they make noise; sometime they have someone call you; sometimes they make you experience boredom or make you daydream which makes

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example St Augustine, *Enarr. In Ps. 31*, n. 1; *in ps. 45*, n. 13 (*PL* 36, 257s, 523); *De corrept. Et gratia*, c. 9, n. 24 (*PL* 44, 931).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor 1, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Provocaressimo* in the text = *provocheremmo*.

<sup>4</sup> Sir (Ecclesiasticus) 15, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> See above in Chapter 7.

<sup>6</sup> This is discernment and reviewing our prayer.

<sup>7</sup> *Di cerebro* in the text = *di cervello*.

<sup>8</sup> The ascetical principle of spiritual “violence” had been already outlined in the early Capuchin Constitutions. Cf. *Const. 1536* n. 1398, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 1 Pet 5, 8.



an hour in the Church or Oratory seem like a thousand years.. Therefore you need to pray robustly.

**4575** 9. The ninth feature is to pray with integrity and this happens when a person journeys along the path of divine justice; when he asks for the right things; when he does not go beyond the limits of distributive justice which gives everyone what is his<sup>1</sup> due, for example, to give honour to God, to imitate the Saints, to despise the world, to resist the devils, to afflict the flesh, to obey superiors, to be at peace with one's equal, to give good example to subjects, to assist the poor, to persevere with friends and grant pardon to enemies. When a person prays in this way he prays with integrity.

10. The tenth feature is to pray with compunction, or devotion, and this happens when a person experiences a sense of inadequacy when considering divine matters and develops a feeling of loving compunction because of which he weeps softly but finds no satisfaction in his tears. Sometimes this happens when a person is considering things that are confronting such as Christ's Passion, sin, hell, death and judgement and is overcome by feelings of regret and sorrow and begins to cry. However it often happens when a person considers God's great goodness and his own wretchedness and then thinks about God's great kindness and his own ingratitude. By considering one or the other of these the soul begins to feel regret and develops holy compunction. Therefore a person should cultivate and consider both of these things in order to pray with compunction of heart. St Gregory says: *Praying consists rather in sighs of compunction than in the sound of set words.*<sup>2</sup>

These words assert the truth that prayer is made up of the emotions of compunction and tears.

**4576** The eleventh feature is to pray fervently this happens when, in order to do something that is pleasing to God's Majesty, a person, under the influence of the gentleness, warmth and glow of a flame of fire, seeks to move above himself. This is how a person who has been relieved of the great burden of sin, set alight by divine grace, enlightened by celestial light, seeks to ascend on high to the Divine Majesty and to unite himself with it. As a consequence of this many become assiduous in prayer but because they lack fervour remain without the fire of fervour in their soul and then become tepid which is not good either for either making them warm or cold.

12. The twelfth feature of prayer is perseverance. This happens when a person never neglects the duty and obligation of praying; does not omit the set time; does not permit every ordinary circumstance, or even important matters, to disturb his prayer. However be aware that just as no virtue can thrive without perseverance prayer will have no value without perseverance. Even though a person can be impeded at times by legitimate occupations this will never diminish the emotion.<sup>3</sup>

**5477** However it should be noted that perseverance requires much patience since it is not possible to persevere without tolerance of the adversities that occur. Thus St

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<sup>1</sup> *Ti* in the text = *gli*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Régamey, La "*compunction de cœur*", in *Vie Spirit. Supplem.* (septembre 1935) 65-83, where this topic is discussed in relation to St Gregory the Great, concerning which see *Moralium lib. 33 in cap. 40 Job*, c. 22. n. 43 (*PL* 76, 701).

<sup>3</sup> The text has *afflitto*. We have rendered this as "emotion – *affetto*" otherwise the sentence would not make sense.

Augustine says appropriately that patience gives birth to, brings forth and nourishes perseverance.<sup>1</sup> Thus St James says: *Patience has a perfect work.*<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion then there are twelve features required for prayer and if these are practised well prayer will go from good to better since a person will find that he is well suited for praying and consequently certain that he will be heard.

These features ought to be committed to memory<sup>3</sup>

*Chapter eleven, which treats of the persons who ought to pray.*

**4578** Among people of sane mind there is no doubt that the Divine Majesty has no need to pray since this is evident and certain because He is the supreme good and supreme grandeur, who has no need of us or of what pertains to us. This is also true because there is nothing greater above Him to whom He could pray.

Christ can certainly pray for us according to what the Apostle says: *who also intercedes for us.*<sup>4</sup> Indeed St John says that we have an advocate with the Father.<sup>5</sup>

In our heavenly home we have the Blessed and Glorious Virgin, who also prays for us unceasingly like a mother. Therefore the holy Roman Church invokes her as advocate, mother of mercy, pious queen.<sup>6</sup> Talking about this way of speaking St Bernard says that the Virgin Mary shows her glorious Son the sacred breast with which she fed Him, and the Son shows His wounds with which He redeemed us to the Father. The Father does not deny anything to the Son nor the Son to His Mother and His Mother to those who pray to her.<sup>7</sup> We can thus approach prayer confidently with the knowledge that we shall be assisted in this manner by the Virgin Mary and Christ our Redeemer.

As one might say we have the holy spirits around us, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels and Angels who not only pray for us but, as Sacred Scripture says, offer our prayers in the sight of God.<sup>8</sup>

**4579** Alongside of these there are all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, all the Apostles, Evangelists and Disciples of the Lord, all the Innocents and Martyrs, all the holy Confessors, all the holy Virgins in their heavenly home who pray for us. The saints to whom we are devoted and whom we invoke as our advocates pray for us in a special manner. Sacred Scripture gave us clear and sure assurance of this when St Peter promised that after he died he would remember the faithful in heaven and in the Old Testament some of the Prophets wrote that they would not forget to pray for the Holy City and the people. The Roman Church calls upon the Saints to pray for us. St

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *Enarr. In ps. 56*, n. 6 (PL 36, 665); etc.

<sup>2</sup> James 1, 4

<sup>3</sup> This is the reason why the author has set the topic out schematically so that it may be memorised.

<sup>4</sup> Rom 8, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 1 Jn 2, 1.

<sup>6</sup> These Marian titles have been taken from the *Hail Holy Queen*.

<sup>7</sup> This quote from St Bernard (*In native. B. M. Virg. N. 7: PL 183, 441*) is also repeated by Alessio Segala da Salò.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Apoc 8, 3-4; Thes 12, 11-21.

Augustine and St Gregory invoke the Saints. Therefore I will say no more about this matter here since the truth of the matter is so clear that it cannot be denied except by fiendish liars and by heretics who are the followers and children of the Devil who do nothing else but contradict truth.<sup>1</sup> Thus we who undoubtedly believe that all the Saints in heaven pray for us ought to do what they do and pray.

However, because some people may excuse themselves, and do find excuses, I have indicated here all those who are obliged to pray and continue to be obliged to pray.

**4580** Firstly I say that all prelates of the Church, whether they are of higher or lower rank, are obliged to pray. The greater weight is upon their shoulders the greater their obligation to pray. The example is set by St Paul who prayed and by St Peter and all the other Apostles. This is why St Paul said; *we prayed and begged that you would be filled with the knowledge of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>2</sup> When at times he asked for assistance from his subjects, both he and the others wrote: “Help us with your prayers”.<sup>3</sup>

The next ones who ought to pray are preachers who, in addition to having a pure conscience and a peaceful mind, ought to engage in holy earnest prayer both in order to understand Sacred Scripture and also to explain it to others. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles St Peter said: *We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*<sup>4</sup> This is so true that the duty of a preacher is to pray and to preach. It is also necessary that those who teach sacred doctrine to others should pray well as did the Angelic Doctor St Thomas.

The third group that ought to pray very diligently are the priests who hear confessions who, in addition to the knowledge, insight and experience that they need to possess, ought to pray very proficiently since they have to perform a very serious duty and are in great danger of offending God, ruining a soul and staining their conscience. However, if they pray God will help them.<sup>5</sup>

**4581** The fourth group that ought to pray are all those who have the care of souls, both in order to set them a good example and so that none of them might be lost. Having the care of souls implies a grasp of various disciplines, and those who care for souls are in great danger because sometimes they lose their own souls and the souls of those for whom they are caring and it has been written: *Your life shall be for his life.*<sup>6</sup>

The fifth group that ought to pray are all those in Holy Orders, whether or not they occupy benefices. However those who hold benefices are under a serious obligation since benefices were set up to guarantee prayer and divine worship and when this does not happen they commit grave sin and theft.<sup>7</sup>

The sixth group who ought to pray are all men and women who live in religious life who are obliged to pray and carry out divine worship by precept. Indeed they ought to recognise that it is impossible to fulfil their profession without praying.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a brutal diatribe against the Protestants.

<sup>2</sup> Col 1, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom 15, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 6, 4.

<sup>5</sup> This betrays a certain sense of ‘fear’ which the early Capuchins experienced about hearing Confessions.

<sup>6</sup> 3 Kings 20, 39.

<sup>7</sup> This is a very strong and courageous statement.

The seventh group who are obliged to pray are all those who hold office in a community, republic as territorial administrators, rectors, governors or magistrates in spheres of the administration of justice. They should offer many prayers so that they do not make mistakes because many times when they have been blinded by passion and emotion they have condemned those who were innocent and released criminals.

**4582** The eighth group that should pray are all fathers and mothers of families who bear the burden of raising their children to honour God and work towards their salvation not only by instructing in good solid doctrine but also by doing everything to enlighten them about the way of the Lord. They ought to pray well as is their duty.

The ninth group that ought to pray is all subjects, children, disciples, servants who should pray for their superiors, those who are in control, who have to direct and provide for them so that the Divine Majesty might always enlighten them to do what is best.

The tenth group which ought to pray is those who are taking up the liberal arts since they should carefully consider how these arts are aimed at teaching decorum and self-control in worldly as well as spiritual matters and it would seem that no level in society could be preserved without them. They should pray that because of these arts they do not mislead the world.

The eleventh group which should pray is those who have mechanical skills. They too should pray because they have to understand that such occupations are dangerous and that they should not be undertaken to do anything against their salvation or God's will. When they pray they should believe that things will turn out well for them.

The twelfth and last group that should pray is all the faithful who should likewise pray to the Divine Majesty for the preservation of the Catholic faith and freedom from the danger of heretics, schematics and the dangers of stubbornness and anathema.

**4583** They should pray for all spiritual and temporal lords and prelates, for all religious and seculars, for all the just and sinners, for all who have troubles and are disconsolate, for all their friends and enemies, for all the living and the dead that the Divine Majesty would deign to forgive our faults, grant us grace, and make us worthy of His love, His peace and for patience in tribulation and for trepidation concerning prosperity. They should pray that He would grant us victory over the devil, the world and the flesh, free us from the dangers of sin, death and hell. They should pray for Him to open our hearts to know and serve Him with sincerity, truth and justice, that we always do what gives Him honour, promotes our salvation and the welfare of His Church.

They should pray that the souls in Purgatory be freed and released from their punishment and go to their heavenly home where they can joyfully give praise, and that we who are here may come to reign with them for ever and ever.

*The twelfth and final chapter concerning those who pray in a useless and unfruitful manner.*

**4584** [...] I conclude then that there are twelve groups who offer useless prayers and fulfil what David said: *may his prayer be turned to sin.* <sup>1</sup>

However, my dearest friends, so that all might take notice, finally I say if we want our prayers to be pleasing to God and of use to us and our neighbours we should, with all diligence, avoid:

Firstly, unfaithfulness and try to remain faithful to God, to His Church, to our neighbours and our conscience, because it is written: *all his works are done with faithfulness.* <sup>2</sup>

Secondly, we should be careful about heresy and regard it to be certain that heretics do not possess the light of the truth of Christ's doctrine and we must avoid them neither speaking to them nor greeting them because it is written: *If anyone comes to you, and does not have Christ's doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.* <sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, we should avoid idolatry and consider that it is written: *they must adore him in spirit and in truth.* <sup>4</sup>

Fourthly, we should avoid superstition which is a diabolical spirit, because it is written: *do not believe every spirit.* <sup>5</sup>

Fifthly, we should avoid stubbornness because it is written: *all hypocrisy is evil.* <sup>6</sup>

Sixth, we should avoid hypocrisy because it is written; *all hypocrisy is evil.* <sup>7</sup>

**4585** Seventh, we must avoid simony, because it is written: *freely you have received, freely give.* <sup>8</sup>

Eighth, we should avoid being mercenary, because it is written: *let all your things be done in charity.* <sup>9</sup>

Ninth, we should avoid inordinate passions, because it is written: *passions worked in us to bring forth the fruit of death.* <sup>10</sup>

Tenth, we should avoid what is not rational and follow what is according to reason, because it is written: *if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* <sup>11</sup>

Eleventh, we should avoid what is filthy, because it is written: *in spirit fervent.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 108, 7 (*Vulg.*). The twelve groups that have been listed will reappear later.

<sup>2</sup> Ps 12, 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 John 9-11.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 4, 24.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Jn 4, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Rom 2, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Is 9, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Mt 10, 8.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 16, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 7, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Gal 5, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 12, 11.

We should avoid ingratitude, because it is written: *be thankful always offering thanks to God.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus by avoiding these occasions of evil and persevering in holy prayer you will please the Divine Majesty and He will make His holy grace work in us which will lead us to His happy kingdom where He lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

*Thus the first part of the booklet comes to a close. In the second part moving on to practical matters, the author proposes a method of prayer to be carried out throughout the whole week during periods of meditation that are set out in quite an original and unusual way though maintaining an emotional tone, as is stated at the beginning. Each is preceded by “admonitions” which are reproduced here because they allow us to concisely understand his method of prayer. Then to provide a concrete sample, we shall select the meditation for Friday and the final exhortation.*

## PART TWO

*Which provides instruction on the method on how a person is to pray on each day of the week using a meditation.*<sup>3</sup>

### *First Admonition*

**4586** My dearest brothers, because in the preceding part we spoke about prayer, what it is, its usefulness, necessity, types and the reason why we should pray, in this part we shall deal with the method of prayer and how to engage in prayer as a practical activity. This method will be set out in such a way that a person may easily meditate, pray and contemplate with consolation of spirit.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to the method which other worthy persons who are greater than me have taught I claim that what follows should be the order.

Firstly, each day the exercise will be carried out in the morning and in the evening beginning on Sunday when in the morning the exercise is centred on the divinity of God and in the evening on the inner love of God.

On Monday morning the exercise is centred on the supreme good and in the evening on the loving works of God.

On Tuesday morning the exercise is centred on eternal life, and in the evening on the particular love of God.

On Wednesday morning the exercise is centred on the grandeur of God, and in the evening on the way the love which come from this is directed.

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<sup>1</sup> Col 13, 15

<sup>2</sup> The following text is added here: *The end of the first part of the useful teaching and spiritual exercise composed by Reverend Father Fra Silvestro da Rossano, capuchin, Gospel preacher.*

<sup>3</sup> The text continues: *Composed by R.P. F. Silvestro da Rossano, a preacher of the Order of Friars Minor of St Francis known as Capuchins, and so as to know how to perform this method we set down some admonitions.*

<sup>4</sup> These are the three progressive stages of prayer; *prayer – meditation – contemplation.*

On Thursday<sup>1</sup> morning the exercise is centred on God's existence and in the evening on God's protective love.

On Friday morning the exercise is centred on the Spirit of God and in the evening on His strong love.

On Saturday morning the exercise is centred on divine perfection and in the evening on the superabundant love of God. This is the general order.<sup>2</sup>

### *Second Admonition*

**4587** We shall lay down seven acts in this exercise so that a person who performs the exercise may be more prepared and disposed to lift his mind up. The first act involves the way of forming a concept, the second concerns the act of giving glory to God, the third concerns our being humble, the fourth concerns our being united to God, the fifth concerns what we ask of God, the sixth what we offer by way of paying homage to God and the seventh how we invoke God.

In the first act which involves forming a concept we propose five considerations about the subject of the meditation.

In the second act which involves offering glory to God we refer to five graces for which we thank God for what we have meditated upon.

In the third act which involves humility we take the blame for our wretchedness and lack of dignity which has caused us to be far removed from the things we have been meditating upon.

In the fourth act which involves being united with God we offer our soul, existence and all our welfare to the divine Majesty asking Him to deign to bring us close to Him through grace.

In the fifth act which involves petition we say from the heart more than with the lips five *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys* connected with the five things that we have been meditating upon.

In the sixth act which involves offering homage we begin at the end of the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* having said *Amen* by asking God and the Virgin Mary, through what we have been meditating on, to grant the petitions which are contained in the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation.

In the seventh act which involves invocation we invoke Christ our Saviour, in virtue of what we have been meditating upon, to deign not to abandon us. We invoke His sweet Mother and all the Saints in heaven to pray for us.

### *Third Admonition*

**4588** Although the act of homage always concludes with us praying for the holy Church and her children yet we also pray individually for various states and kinds of people. That is to say:

On Sunday morning we pray for all sinners and for those who are in the grace of God. At night we pray for all of our friends and enemies.

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<sup>1</sup> *Giobbia* in the text = *giovedì*

<sup>2</sup> Note that there is only one subject in these meditations, God's love.

On Monday morning we pray for all who are in distress and for all who are enjoying prosperity in this life. At night we pray for all the spiritual and temporal lords and prelates.

On Tuesday morning we pray for all the Religious Orders, for all religious men and women and those occupied in the service of God. At night we pray for all lay people who are married or alone and for all who live in the world.

On Wednesday morning we pray for all those for whom we are obliged to pray or who are our benefactors or for whom we are conscience bound to pray according to situations which are obliging us to pray for these persons. In the evening we pray for those for whom we have been asked to pray. On Thursday morning we pray for all those who have offended us in any way. At night we pray for all those whom we have offended or scandalised or for who we have set a bad example.

On Friday morning we pray for all our benefactors and for all who look after our affairs. In the evening we pray for all those evil people who offend the holy Church and us.

On Saturday morning we pray for all the saints in general. In the evening we pray for all for whom we have a special regard. When we conclude we also pray for the faithful departed.

#### *Fourth Admonition*

**4589** Although we always say at the conclusion, Lord may this happen through your mercy, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, through the merits of His glorious Mother, and through the merits of all His Saints, nevertheless every day and every time we pray we ask Jesus Christ, through what we have been meditating upon never to abandon us and we ask His glorious Mother and all the Saints to pray for us. Every time that we pray we also invoke individual Saints. That is to say:

On Sunday morning we specially invoke all the angels and saints. In the evening we invoke all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets.

On Monday morning we invoke the holy Apostles. On Monday evening we invoke the holy Evangelists.

On Tuesday morning we invoke the holy Martyrs. On Tuesday evening we invoke all the Holy Innocents.

On Wednesday morning we invoke all the holy Pontiffs. On Wednesday evening we invoke the holy Doctors.

On Thursday morning we invoke the holy Priests. On Thursday evening we invoke all the holy Monks and Hermits.

On Friday morning we invoke the holy Virgins. On Friday evening we invoke the holy Widows.

On Saturday morning we invoke all the Saints. On Saturday evening we invoke the Saints to whom we have a special devotion.

#### *Final Admonition*

**4590** You ought to know that although this order with its acts has been set down for each day that nevertheless a spiritual person may set himself to meditate, pray and



contemplate as the spirit of devotion moves him and as he knows that it will be more fruitful for his soul. However the spirit is delicate and should not be bound by rules unless it is clear they arouse it more and enable it to enjoy greater devotion. However, at the end of this work we shall devote a chapter to the things which a person should use to promote more devotion.

What is important when you experience something devotional is not to shun the things that do appeal to you with you adopting the things which others do not practice while they practise what you do not. Likewise you should not shun the methods which others use because the Lord's graces are diverse and they are acquired in different ways, with all of them containing the amount of discrete, humble and perfect charity that is granted to them by the Lord.<sup>1</sup> ... [...]

*Sixth exercise: for Friday morning.*

*Admonition*

**4591** In order to understand the process of the way a person should practice prayer it is a great help to consider that the person ought to think about the spiritual nature of God on Friday morning, because we see how on that day Blessed Jesus surrendered and committed His spirit to His Father when He suffered the Passion on the cross. Thus the holy theologians say that the spirit committed itself to the spirit and through this commitment, which is the mystery of mysteries, we profited immeasurably. This can be summarised in a word: *Everything has been given to us in Christ whether in heaven or here on earth.*<sup>2</sup> However, everyone should consider these most divine mysteries starting with systematic acts.

*Regarding the act of forming a concept*

**4592** Consider, O my soul, how your eternal and immortal God is the eternal, immortal and living spirit who is spirit by nature since He is pure and most simple act. Thus He is not composite or matter or form, or act or potency, or pertaining to a genus, or classification or species, or a property or substance or accident, but is beyond all that is physical. Yet Sacred Scripture attributes to Him the dimensions of a body and its members, although it does so deliberately so that by means of the images of material quantity we may arrive at the greatness of His spiritual power.

Thus the eyes which are attributed to Him in Scripture signify that God can see everything in His mind's eye. The depth of this vision extends to all hidden things. Its height reaches His infinite excellence. Its duration spans the duration of eternity. Its extent reaches the fullness of His charity. His hands signify His power. His lips and mouth signify His wisdom. His ears signify His intelligence. His feet signify that creatures are below Him in dignity. His nose signifies pleasure. His touch signifies life. His face signifies His divine existence. . His arms signify His power. His head signifies His authority. His shoulders signify His revelation, His legs signify His stability. His heart signifies His love.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the golden rule of the primacy of the spirit over regulations and methods and of respect towards "holy prayer" and a criterion that is repeated by other Capuchin spiritual authors and is typically "Franciscan".

<sup>2</sup> This is a combination of Rom 8, 32 and Col 1, 20.

**4593** Consider, O my soul, how great is the spiritual nature of your Lord which consists of completely eternal, infinite and divine memory. This does not mean that the Divine Majesty possesses a memory in order to recall things in the past, or to foresee things in the future since all is present to the Divine Majesty in one act of knowing. However, it is called memory in as much as He cannot forget anything that has occurred or will possibly occur. Thus God is said to be mindful of us when He confers grace on us<sup>1</sup> and to forget us when He punishes us.<sup>2</sup>

God's memory is so perfect that He will never forget anything that we have done. When predicated of the Father memory is said to be fertile. By means of this fertility the Father produces the Son who is the true image of His memory on which the image of all the other creatures depends.

Oh my soul, think of the great spiritual quality of your God which is so great that it is intelligence itself, which comprehends itself and all things. Let us consider how all the treasures of His eternal wisdom and knowledge are contained there.<sup>3</sup> There dwell all His incomprehensible judgements.<sup>4</sup> The holy Doctors think that God knows past and future events as being present, that He knows hidden things clearly; things that are corruptible and incorruptible; things that change and what is unchangeable; things that are contingent as if they were necessary. It is there that He considers the divine blueprints which contain all the ideal and concrete concepts of the nature of all creatures. Although God is totally intellect in essence, nevertheless the Son is said to be the Word of God, who lives with God eternally and who created the world in time.

**4594** Oh my soul, think of the spiritual nature of your God which is so great that it does not lack any perfection of will. Indeed His will is so important that everything which God knows in His intellect controls what His divine will ordains, which produces divine pleasure, which is always accomplished. It is His divine pleasure that He wishes all of us to be saved.<sup>5</sup> This is provided that we observe all His divine precepts for otherwise by the same act of will He wishes that we be deprived of salvation. The divine will is attributed to the Holy Spirit because He is God's craftsman.

Oh my soul, think of your Lord's great spiritual nature which is totality power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and love. Although He exercised these virtues when creating, governing and providing for the world, nevertheless it is His unique wish to demonstrate them in the work of our redemption. He demonstrates power in the union of the human and divine nature; goodness in taking on our faults accepting the obligation of paying our debt; wisdom in knowing how to provide healing against the devil, sin, death, hell and the cancelling of God's anger. He demonstrates mercy in pardoning our powerlessness and supporting our need. He demonstrates justice in punishing and purging sin by means of His Son's Passion and death. He demonstrates love in His journeying around, in all His divine actions and especially at the supper, in the garden, in Jerusalem and on the cross.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example Ps 97, 3 (*Vulg.*); LK 1, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example Ps 108, 16; 18, 24, (*Vulg.*).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Col 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom 11, 33

<sup>5</sup> Cf 1 Tim 2, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Note the translation of deep theological concepts into familiar language.

*Regarding the act, glorification*

**4595** My God although I am nothing in Your sight, nevertheless I feel contentment, acceptance, longing and pleasure<sup>1</sup> that Your Majesty is Your divine spiritual nature which is most pure and most simple, that Your memory is most fertile, Your intellect most wise, Your will most well-ordered. You are most profound wisdom, unconquerable power, most abundant goodness, most sincere justice, most all-embracing mercy and most splendid charity.

My God I adore, praise, thank and bless You because by means of Your great nature as spirit you deign to be adored, praised, thanked and blessed.

My God I am contented, I wish, am delighted and desire that Your Majesty should be acknowledged, loved, served, praised, thanked and blessed with great gratitude by me and by all rational creatures with the zeal that pleases Your Majesty.

My Lord if You are not acknowledged, loved and served, adored, praised, thanked and blessed as much and in the manner in which You deserve and is befitting to Your Holy Spirit, I beg You, through the same Spirit, to see fit to pardon our ingratitude.

My Lord, I am contented, pleased and bless all those creatures, especially Your saints, who praise, thank and bless your spiritual nature which cannot be comprehended, and I am upset and displeased and regret that we offend You and blaspheme. However, deign, O Lord, to forgive our great iniquity.

*Regarding the act of humility.*

**4596** My God what is Your creature compared with Your spiritual nature? Nothing, O my Lord! You gave me the breath of Your spiritual nature when You created me.<sup>2</sup> However, my Lord, I put aside the spiritual life through which I resembled you and delighted in the life of the flesh through which I was like the beasts. Oh Lord, Sacred Scripture attributes bodily limbs to You by way of imagery so that we may come to know Your strength. I have real bodily limbs by means of which I display vanity of the eyes, stubbornness in what I hear, laziness with my hands, restlessness with my feet, evil speech with my mouth, evil living through my sense of small. I separate myself from the spirit that You gave me. Your Majesty, my Lord, is exalted while I am brought low by powerlessness. Your Majesty possesses profound wisdom while I possess profound foolishness. You are full of love while I am caught in the iniquity of hatred. Your Majesty possesses widespread mercy while I am all cruelty.<sup>3</sup> Oh Lord, when will your poor servant possess Your true and living spirit?

O my God, what is my spirit compared with the grandeur of Your Holy Spirit? You are eternal memory which is most fertile and gratifying to Yourself and to all creatures. I am a person who is so dull in memory that I forget Your divine Majesty, Your gifts, Your strength, because I am totally carnal and because I forget I am most ungrateful and deserve to be deprived of the benefits that I have received as well as those which I have not yet received. O my Lord due to my ingratitude frequently I do not have a lively hope but am filled with fear. O Lord, who are most happy divine

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<sup>1</sup> This formula for an act of love and thanksgiving is used here as an act of glorifying reminiscent of what appeared in the *Circle* by Francesco da Gesi. It is an example of prayer of praise.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gen 2, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eph 3, 18; Job 11, 8-9.

memory, when will Your poor servant remember Your divine Majesty, Your holy qualities and Your gifts so as to give You honour and recall Your blessings so as to admit my fault?

**4597** My God, what is my spirit compared with Your most holy spiritual nature? It is as nothing since Your Majesty is all wise of intellect and I am all foolishness; You are true knowledge and I am wicked ignorance. By means of Your intellect Your Majesty knows everything eminently since You have a completely spiritual nature. Whatever I know, my Lord, I know as an imperfect person with an animal nature. O Lord, Your profound judgements are within your mind. My mind, O Lord, rarely has solid and sincere judgements but has judgements that are profane in Your sight. How many bad decisions occupy my mind? When, O Lord, will I make right decisions knowing and discerning right from wrong, good from evil, what is just and what is unjust? May it please You, O Lord, that I may always make decisions that are correct in Your sight.

My God, what is my spirit compared to Your spiritual nature? It is nothing since You are utterly upright will, evil has no place in Your divine will. My Lord, my will is evil and I do not have control of either my intellect or emotions. Oh Lord, I am so evil that in my wickedness I wish to be completely drenched in sin and disregard for Your will. I do not obey what is Your divine pleasure. I do not conform to the indications of Your will as laid down in Your law. It is Your wish that I ought to be just and I am unjust. It is Your will that I ought to be holy, and I am a sinner. It is Your will that I ought to be perfect and I am imperfect. You will the death of the sinner<sup>1</sup> and our wills give rise to such death. Oh Lord, when will I do Your will? Lord, grant that I shall always be prepared to do Your will, because I am lost without it. Help me, Lord, to carry out Your holy will.

**4598** My God, Your spiritual nature is so filled with power that by comparison I am completely vitiated flesh! Your strong power seizes my weakness to make it strong. Your wisdom knew how to dispense the medicine and the cure, and I walked away not only from the medicine but also away from You, the true physician. Your Majesty snatched my sins to punish them by means of Your justice and innocence, and I went after sin. Your Majesty took up suffering in order show us mercy, and the Jews persecuted You with such cruelty, Judas sold You and the disciples abandoned You. You sweated blood and were bound with ropes. You were treated brutally in Anna's house. Your face was slapped in the house of Caifas and Your precious face was spat upon. You were faultlessly accused in Pilate's house. Before Herod You were held up to ridicule<sup>2</sup> In front of the people You were flogged, ignominiously crowned with thorns and sentenced to death with the cross placed on Your shoulder. Oh Lord, hanging naked on the cross You were crucified and tormented, cursed and abandoned by others! Oh Lord, how You demonstrated Your great love, especially by Your death! Man did not recognise this, the sun was darkened, the earth shook, rocks were split and the dead rose.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ez 18, 23; 33, 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Deluso* in the text = *messo in ridicolo*.

<sup>3</sup> Mt 27, 51-52.

Oh Lord, how full of charity You were! Oh my Lord You spoke and said out of charity: *Forgive them.*<sup>1</sup> Charity made You speak to the thief promising him Paradise.<sup>2</sup> Charity made You speak to Your Mother: *Behold your son.*<sup>3</sup> Charity made You cry out: *I thirst.*<sup>4</sup> Charity made You say: *Why have you forsaken me?*<sup>5</sup> Love reached its summit on the cross and surrendered its spirit,<sup>6</sup> not Yours, but mine, since I was healed and become a man united to God. Oh Lord, how great is the iniquity of Your poor servant! Lord, what great iniquity!

*Regarding the act of union*

**5499** My Lord, I beg You not to abandon me to my carnal nature, but, as you did at Your supper, unite me to Your spirit of charity, so that I may give good example to my neighbour by means of Your Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

Grant that I may possess the spirit of Your charity so that I may continually offer myself to the Father in true obedience as You did in the garden.<sup>8</sup>

Grant me Your spirit so that, O Lord, I may willingly pray and so that I may offer myself from now on to suffer as you did when You said so willingly with feeling: *the hour has come.*<sup>9</sup>

O Lord, grant me Your Spirit so that I may love how You endured the scourging, the thorns, the spittle, the insults and injuries and all the persecution so that I may learn patience out of love for you.

O Lord, Grant me Your spirit so that I may carry the cross of Your holy service until death with true perseverance.

**4600** Grant me Your spirit, O Lord, that by the cross of this world I may be crucified out of love for You,<sup>10</sup> and say Your seven words,<sup>11</sup> so that I may forgive my enemies and help those who ask me for help as You did to the good thief; so that I may support my friends, as you did Your Mother.

Lord, grant me Your spirit so that I may have a real thirst and desire to please You.

Lord, grant that I may have Your spirit so that no one may complain about me just as Your Majesty did not complain about Your Father for abandoning You but indicated that it was my sins that caused Your abandonment.

O Lord, grant that I may possess Your spirit so that I may consume my whole life with You by truly persevering in obeying Your precepts. Grant, Lord, that I may

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 23, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Lk 23, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 19, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 19, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 27, 46; Mk 15, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lk 23, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jn 13, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mt 26, 39; Mk 14, 36; Lk 22, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Mt 26, 45.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gal 6, 14.

<sup>11</sup> These are the last seven words of Christ on the cross and also the seven petitions in the *Our Father*.

always bow my head before Your divine Majesty and may say at the end of my life:  
*Into your hand I commend my spirit.* <sup>1</sup> *Who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.*

*Regarding the act of petitioning. Say five Our Fathers and Hail Marys.*

**4601** The first is said with reverence because<sup>2</sup> the Spirit of God is totally being with nothing physical in it, but is authentically spiritual giving life to everything that lives.

The second is said with reverence because the Spirit of God is eternal, divine and sacred memory that experiences joy as He recalls Himself and also all creatures without ever becoming forgetful.

The third is said with reverence because the Spirit of God is totally intellect which comprehends Himself and all creatures and nothing that exists at present or in the possible future can stay hidden beyond His knowledge.

The fourth is said with reverence because the Spirit of God is totally will where nothing can frustrate His divine pleasure. Those who do resist shall be punished according to the decree of His divine will.

The fifth is said with reverence because the Spirit of the Lord is all wisdom, power, goodness, justice, mercy and love. Whatever we think of as being in God is His spirit of glory, life and being.

*Regarding the act of oblation*

**4602** *Amen.* So be it. Grant O Lord<sup>3</sup> that we all may be spiritual beings just as You are Father with spiritual fatherhood.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Lord that we may have Your real spiritual nature just as You are united to us as we are spiritually and really Yours.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant, O Lord, that we may be absorbed in heaven completely just as You are in heaven with Your eternal spiritual nature.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant, O Lord, that we may be so spiritual that we always bless Your holy name which is composed completely of a divine spiritual nature.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant. O Lord, that through sharing in Your spiritual nature, we may possess your real, spiritual kingdom.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant, O Lord, that we may have such a spiritual nature that we shall always do Your most spiritual will.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant, O Lord, that we may be nourished by the bread of your Spirit that those of us who hunger may be satisfied.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant, O Lord that in virtue of the divine Spirit we may be exonerated of what we own because of our faults and in like manner forgive our neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 23, 46; Ps 30, 8 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>2</sup> In the following sentences we often find *li* in the text which is equivalent to *lo*.

<sup>3</sup> *Signore* in the text = *fa, o signore* here and in the following sentences. Note that the first nine petitions are a paraphrase of the *Our Father*.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant eternal God that Your spirit will guide us to overcome temptation and that we may be freed from the evil of our faults and the punishment which our blundering spirit deserves by means of your precious spiritual strength.

**4603** The one thing that I ask, Lord, for Your entire Church, for all Your obedient and faithful children, especially the benefactors of the Church and our benefactors, is that in Your mercy You would deign to give them sufficient spirit for them to live with a generous share of Your spirit and your gifts so that we might become more generous..

I ask this, O Lord, through Your most merciful spirit and through Your most spiritual mercy and also through the merits of our Saviour and Your glorious Virgin and all Your saints. I also ask eternal peace for our departed. *Amen.*

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Glorious Virgin<sup>1</sup> that, by the divine Spirit, we may be filled with spiritual grace in the same way that you received it fully.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Glorious Virgin that the Lord may dwell in us with His Spirit of truth in the same way that He dwelt in you.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Glorious Virgin that we may be blessed by God's holy Spirit as You were blessed among all creatures.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Glorious Virgin that that all our fruits may be a spiritual and redeeming blessing as your fruit was.

*Amen.* So be it. Grant O Glorious Virgin that through the divine Spirit that dwells in you that you will always pray for us and especially at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

#### *Regarding the act of invocation*

**4604** O Jesus my Lord, who became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and, filled with the gifts of the Spirit, conquered and overcame the enemy and who wished that we should be very attentive to the Spirit, I beg, ask and implore You not to abandon us but to grant us new life by means of Your Spirit.

O glorious Virgin, who was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and who moved by the Spirit sang: *Magnificat*,<sup>2</sup> I beg you to pray for us creatures of flesh that we may possess the spirit of God.

O Saints of heaven, holy Angels who all serve the Lord spiritually I beseech and call upon you to pray for us. I invoke especially St Clare, St Catherine of Siena, St Catherine martyr and virgin, St Agnes, St Cecilia, St Agatha, St Lucy and St Ursula,<sup>3</sup> who despised the pomp of the world, and the filth of the flesh by means of the Spirit of God and overcame all the carnal work of the devil, and now enjoy the fruits of the spirit in heaven.

Pray, pray for us so that we may do the same in this life with the help of the Spirit of the Lord, and then come to enjoy Him in heavenly glory. *Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> The final invocations are a paraphrase of the *Hail Mary*.

<sup>2</sup> Lk 1, 46ff

<sup>3</sup> The reference to women saints is interesting and can be explained by the fact that the booklet was composed above all for the Benedictine Nuns at Santo Lorenzo di Venezia.

*The exercise for Friday evening*

*Admonition*

**4603** Because on Friday more than on any other day we have considered the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the most perfect Redeemer and most Just Saviour, it is fitting that on that day that we ought to recall it in a special manner not only in the morning by going over it in our minds, but that we should recall also in the evening the great love with which He loved us so tenderly and strongly. This love was so strong that it amounted to the ultimate in strong loving. It was truly strong because it could not ever be extinguished by any opposition as Scripture says so well: *Many waters could not extinguish charity.*<sup>1</sup> It was the ultimate love because it accomplished our salvation and when He suffered it was all for this purpose.

When such love is considered thoroughly it strengthens us to resist all that is contrary to it for love of Him and it gives us a purpose for all our good actions to the point of eternal salvation. Therefore we shall consider this love and all its actions, and first of all:

*With regard to the act of forming a concept*

**4606** Oh my Soul, consider the grandeur of the Lord's love and how strong it is. The strength of such lover is there at the beginning in the middle and at the end. In the beginning it is love, in the middle charity and at the end delight. *Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.*<sup>2</sup>

Love predestined his life, charity orchestrated His activity, and delight sent Him out. Love made a promise to our saintly Fathers, charity presented Him to them figuratively and delight told of Him prophetically. Love made Him longed for, charity made them ask for Him and delight made them anticipate His coming. Love proclaimed His coming, charity made Him take flesh and delight beheld the union of God and man. *We saw his glory.*<sup>3</sup> Love conferred all kinds of strength on Him, charity gave Him every grace and delight gave Him every kind of perfection. Love gave Him all the knowledge and wisdom of God, charity gave Him glory and delight gave Him a share in divinity. Love made Him assume the role of a servant, charity made Him obey even to death on a cross and delight made Him head of the entire Church.

Oh my soul, consider how your Lord was strong in love, charity and delight. Love brought about His birth, charity brought Him to earth and delight made Him cry. Love placed Him in Mary's womb, charity clothed Him in swaddling blankets and delight nourished Him on holy, virginal milk. Love placed Him in the manger, charity placed Him between two animals and delight made Him restful. Love made the Angels announce His coming,<sup>4</sup> charity enabled the shepherd to discover Him and delight made them sing: *Gloria in excelsis.*<sup>5</sup> Love made the star appear in the East, charity

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<sup>1</sup> Canticle of Canticles 8, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 13, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 1, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Denuntiano* in the text = *anunciano*.

<sup>5</sup> Lk 2, 14.



led the Magi and delight made them adore Him with three symbolic gifts. Love caused Him to be circumcised, charity caused Him to shed blood and delight conferred His name on Him: *His name was called Jesus*,<sup>1</sup> because He would save everyone, provided that they obeyed Him.

**6407** Oh my soul, consider the strength of your Saviour's love. Love brought Him to be presented in the temple, charity had Him rest in Simian's arms and delight predicted that He was a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. Love made Him escape into Egypt, charity made Him return to the land of Judah and delight made Him a Nazarene. Love made Him go to the Temple, charity made Him ask questions and debate with the Doctors and delight made the Virgin Mary search for Him in sorrow for three days. Love made Him busy with the affairs of His Father, charity made Him subject to Mary and Joseph and delight made Him appear to be Joseph's son. Love made Him advance with age, charity made Him grow in wisdom and delight made Him grow in grace before men and God. Love made Him come to the Jordan, charity made Him submit to being baptised and delight made Him humble before such a great mystery. Love made the heavens open, charity made the Spirit come down upon Him in the form of a dove and delight made the Father's voice heard: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him.*<sup>2</sup>

Oh my soul, consider that Christ's love was so great that it made Him go into the desert. His charity made Him fast for forty days and delight made Him hungry. Love tempted Him, charity made Him fight temptation and delight gave Him the victory and the Angels came and minister to Him. Love made Him gather disciples, charity made Him preach for three years and, thirdly, delight made Him work miracles and fulfil prophesies. Love caused Him reveal the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, charity caused Him to reveal that He was the Good Shepherd and delight to reveal that He was the true King of Israel. Love made Him know that He was the way, charity that He was the truth and delight that He was the life. Love made Him undergo exhaustion, charity made Him cry and delight made Him poor in everything so that *He had nowhere to lay his head.*<sup>3</sup>

**4608** Oh my soul, give further consideration to the strength of your Lord's love that made Him host the supper on Mount Zion, the charity that made Him institute the Sacraments and the delight that made Him ordain priests from those who had been Apostles. Love made Him give authority to the Apostles, charity instructed them in matters of doctrine, prophesy the scriptures and revelation and delight made Him set them an example of humility. Love made Him go to the Mount of Olives, charity made Him cross the brook and delight made Him go into the garden. Love made Him pray three times, charity made Him go back to the disciples and delight made Him sweat blood. Love strengthened Him to carry out the Father's will, charity made the Angels come to comfort Him and delight made Him wake the Apostles and face the crowd. Love made Him speak to Judas, charity made the servants fall down and delight made Him, after He had defended the Apostles, submit to being bound. Love made Him bring about being presented to Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, charity caused Him endure jibes, slaps, spittle and mockery, and delight made Him dally like a timid little lamb. Love led Him to be accused, charity led Him to be dressed in

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 2, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 3, 17; Pt 1, 17; Lk 9, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Mt 8, 20; Lk 9, 58.

purple and delight determined that there was no reason for Him to die. Love arranged that he should be bound and flogged, charity that He should be crowned with thorns and delight that He should be sentenced to death. Love arranged that *like a sheep* He should be led to die, charity that He should carry the cross on His shoulder, be stripped, charity that He should be stretched out on the cross and delight that He should be nailed to the cross. Love arranged that a hammer would be there, charity that there would be nails and delight that the nails would be struck and would pierce His hands and feet. Love made Him hang on the cross, charity made His speak and delight made Him die on the cross fulfilling all the Scriptures.

Behold, Oh my soul, the great strength of God's love for us!<sup>2</sup>

*Regarding the act of glorification*

**4609** My God, I am happy, gratified, moved and pleased that Your Majesty is a God who loves us with such strong love, such perfect charity and such consummate delight.

My God, I adore, praise, thank and bless You with all my heart because the nature and amount of the love that You have displayed for me who am so ungrateful You deserved to be always adored, praised and thanked.

My God, I hope, counsel, would like and desire that Your Majesty would be known, loved and served by me and all of Your creatures with the kind of gratitude that is expressed in praise, blessing, adoration and love of the variety that Your strong love displayed.

My God, if You are not known, loved and served, adored, praised and thanked by us as You ought and deserve to be, I beg that You to forgive our stupidity and evil ingratitude and our malicious state of being.

My God, I am content, acknowledge, desire am pleased with and bless all those creatures who acknowledge, love, serve, praise thank and bless You and I am sorry about all those who offend You and for my sins, which have offended You more than anything else. Ah, Lord, forgive my iniquity, wretchedness and ingratitude.

*Regarding the act of humility*

**4610** My God, what can Your poor servant say in the presence of your Majesty when you consider his misdirected love, his confused charity and the fragile vigour of his inadequate delight? Oh Lord, You placated the eternal Father and tempered His great and just anger by means of Your love, charity and delight on the cross. Lord, I am a person who provokes God's anger once again by the weakness of my love and because of my ingratitude I am unworthy of Your friendship and that of Your Saintly Father. Ah Lord, my means of the strength of Your delight forgive Your poor creature for so many faults.

My Lord, by means of the strength of Your love Your Majesty has cancelled my sins through the shedding of Your own blood. Lord, I am so weak that once again I have succumbed to sin and allowed myself to be defeated by all kinds of iniquity and I

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 8, 32; Isa 33, 7.

<sup>2</sup> This is a most original and striking meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life.

have pushed Your strength aside more times than I can count. Oh Lord, when will Your poor creature be really able to be free of all sin and iniquity? Lord, I am so weak that *there is no health in my flesh: for I do not that good which I will: but the evil that I hate.*<sup>1</sup> I recognise a law in my flesh which drives back the law in my mind which is completely aligned with Your spirit. My Lord, I find no other remedy than that Your Majesty crucifies my flesh with fear of You. *Pierce my flesh with your fear.*<sup>2</sup>

**4611** My Lord, what is the strength of my love compared with the strength of Your love for me? It is as nothing since Your Majesty conquered and overcame the devil with the strength of that love and concurred and overcame the devil. My Lord, I would not have<sup>3</sup> that kind of strength to oppose such an enemy. Indeed my Lord, I allow myself to be defeated immediately by all kinds of modest suggestions and tricks. I lose the contest straight away. Ah Lord, forgive my great weakness! When will Your creature be so strong when fighting the devil that he can overcome him and trample him underfoot with the help of the weaponry of Your Majesty? The might of disordered love is what makes me fail frequently; my Lord, and when I thought that I had won I now find that I have been overcome by the wiles of pride, lust, anger, sloth, vainglory and the emptiness of wealth. Ah Lord I beg of You that through Your mercy that You make me love Your strong charity because then I shall be safe. What can separate me from Your charity? Is there nothing? *Not height, nor breath, nor depth nor any other creature, nor principalities, nor powers.*<sup>4</sup>

Ah Lord, make Your poor creature well loved by Your holy and strong charity once and for all.

**4612** My Lord, what is the strength of my love compared to the strength of Your love? It is as nothing because Your Majesty by the strength of Your love freed me from eternal death and the pit of hell; while I, Oh Lord, by the weakness of the little love that I have for You and the vigour of inordinate love that abides within me, win eternal death and a place in hell. My Lord, unless I abandon this inordinate love I shall endanger my salvation. However, to abandon it I need Your true strength. My Lord grant that I may experience Your shame so that Your life may be evident in me and with me,<sup>5</sup> otherwise I could never escape the spiritual death of sin, nor be saved at the time of mortal death, nor free from eternal death. Ah Lord, when will Your creature be united to You so that he might say: *I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.*<sup>6</sup>

My Lord, what is the strength of my love compared with that of Your Majesty? It is as nothing because as a sign of the strength of Your love Your Majesty willed that rocks be split, the earth quake, the sun be darkened and graves be opened. My Lord, because of the power of my inordinate love I am harder than stone and dryer than the earth so that I have to really break my heart open and tremble in Your sight. I give off an odour worse than the grave and am more insensitive than the dead because of my inordinate love and so I should open the tomb of my evil will and what it desires and

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 37, 4. 8 (*Vulg.*); Rom 7, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ps 118, 120 (*Vulg.*).

<sup>3</sup> *Prevaglio* in the text = *prevalgo*.

<sup>4</sup> Rom 8, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 4, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Gal 2, 20.

by means of the strength of Your love bring my will to life and revive my dead soul.<sup>1</sup> Ah Lord, once upon a time at Your death the sun was darkened, I am always in the dark. My God, when will my mind become lucid and clear? Ah Lord, I beg You by means of Your love to tear the veil that covers my soul's face so that I can see my heart uncovered before Your Majesty. My Lord, uncover the *Holy of Holies* of Your charity for me so that I may truly live with the strength of love that You want us to live with to glorify Your Majesty forever and ever. *Amen.*

*Regarding the act of union.*

**4613** My Lord, I do not know what to say in Your sight other than forgive me. I beg You to let me be crucified with You. Lord let Your life be the cross, and my body and soul be the crucifix, Your sanctifying grace be the nail in the right hand, Your merciful forgiveness be the nail in the left hand, Your sanctifying justice be the nail in the right foot, Your enlightening truth be the nail in the left foot, Your saintly charity be the lance that wounds my side and opens my heart so that You<sup>2</sup> may penetrate the depths of my heart, Your seven words the seven virtues,<sup>3</sup> the crown of thorns be the pain caused by my sins, the sour taste in Your mouth be the pain caused by me offending Your Majesty, Your death be my perseverance to the end, the sign on the cross be my pledge of salvation, the signs in the heavens and the earth be my contempt of the world, Your love be my good thoughts and actions. May I never come down from my cross, Oh my Lord, until I can strike my breast and I can truly adore You and bring my brothers to profess Your name: *Indeed this was the Son of God.*<sup>4</sup>

Oh Lord, grant that Nicodemus, by means of Your mercy, and Joseph, through Your merits, would take all infidelity, heresy, wrongdoing and wickedness from me, and when I have been wrapped in a white sheet and in Your merits with the aromatic incense of Your holy life, bury me in Your tomb which is the grace of your new tomb which was dug out of the rock<sup>5</sup> which is You, Oh my Lord, because then I may rise to Your new, Your true life to adore You with Your Saints in love forever. *Amen.*<sup>6</sup>

*Regarding the act of petition: the Our Father and the Hail Mary are to be said five times.*

**4614** Firstly, a person says with reverence that God's love was so strong that it foretold Christ in symbols, in prophesy and in the anticipation of the ancient Patriarchs and His holy Prophets.

Secondly, a person says with reverence that this love was so strong that it humbled Him to the point of becoming like sinful mankind, binding Him to law and punishment and to being cursed.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ez 37, 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Tu* in the text = *tua here.*

<sup>3</sup> The seven virtues are the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mt 27, 54

<sup>5</sup> *Eccesa* in the text = *scavata.*

<sup>6</sup> This prayer, which emphasises a focused and practical interpretation of the Crucifixion, burial and resurrection. is intense and original

Thirdly, a person says with reverence that this love is so strong that He was subjected to growing in stages so that He looked like being Joseph's son and the servant of mortal men.

Fourthly, a person says with reverence that this love was so strong that only such power could make Him toil, suffer contradictions, temptations, perform miracles, and teach through natural example.

Fifthly, a person says with reverence that this love was so strong that it made Him fulfil the law and the symbolic images, institute the Sacraments and go to death willingly, obey and fulfil Scripture for our salvation.

*Regarding the act of oblation*

**4615** *Amen.* Lord, let it be so that we may be children with the same strong divine love, that You have as a Father who has such strong paternal charity that You overlook our ingratitude.

*Amen.* My Lord, let it be so that through the power of Your love we may possess You as completely as You possess us.

*Amen.* My Lord, let it be so that we are no longer controlled by strong inordinate earthly affection, but by the heavenly affection of Your love, just as You are always controlled by the heavenly power of Your charity.

*Amen.* Lord, let it be so that through the power of Your love we may be among those who always hold that Your name is holy.

*Amen.* Lord, let it be so that through the power of Your love we may always do Your will.

*Amen.* Lord, let it be so that, through the great power of your love, we may be fed with the most powerful bread of Your love.

*Amen.* Lord, let it be so that, through the great power of Your love, our faults may be forgiven and the debt incurred by our sins remitted, and, by that same love, we forgive the liability incurred by those who are in debt to us.

*Amen.* Lord, let it be so that, through the power of Your love, we may conquer all temptations and be free from the evil of our reprobate senses and eternal punishment.

**4616** We ask this for the entire holy Roman Church and for all Your faithful. However we especially ask it for all the evildoers who love with the power of the diabolical love of infidelity, with the carnal love of schism,<sup>1</sup> with the power of the worldly love of heresy, with the power of the self-love of sin and stubbornness, so that, Oh Lord, they do not carry out such evil. Take away such an iniquitous disposition from them by the power of Your love so that they will not be able to work such evil against the spouse that You have won by Your blood, against your holy Name and against Your holy flock.

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<sup>1</sup> *le cisme* in the text = *scisma*.

Ah Lord, I beg this of You through the power of Your strong charity and by the merits of our Saviour, of the glorious Virgin, of all your Saints that the dead rest in everlasting peace. *Amen.*

*Amen.* O glorious Virgin, let it be so that we have such powerful love that we may have sanctifying grace as you had it.

*Amen.* O glorious Virgin, let it be so that we may be so strong in the love of God that the Lord who lived in you may live in us through that strength.

*Amen.* O glorious Virgin let it be so that by means of the power of the divine love that was in you we may be blessed as you were Blessed Mother.

*Amen.* May it be so that by this power we would produce good fruit as you did through the power of divine love.

*Amen.* Let it be so, Oh Blessed Virgin, that by always praying for us in life and death, we may be strong and constant in divine love, oppose your enemies and achieve our salvation.

*Regarding the act of invocation*

**4617** My Lord Jesus Christ, who on the cross by the great power of Your divine love, today wished to conquer and overcome all our enemies and placate the just anger of the eternal God, I beg and invoke You not to abandon us but to strengthen us with the power of Your divine love.

O glorious Virgin, whose heart was pierced with sorrow through divine love, I beg you not to abandon us but to pray for us.

Oh God's Angels and Saints, especially St Anna, mother of God's Mother, St Elizabeth, mother of the great Baptist, St Anna prophetess, St Elizabeth widow, St Anastasia, St Mary Magdalene, who experienced the power of divine love, by means of which you conquered and overcame the enemy and now possess the prize, I beg and call upon you to assist us and pray for us so that by the power of this love we may be like you on earth and then in heaven for the glory of God. [...].

*Final chapter: concerning the things that dispose us towards devotion.*

**4618** Each person should stimulate himself each day to arouse his soul to accept the Holy Spirit, His holy operation and to pray to God and His Saints with a pure heart.<sup>1</sup> There are many opinions about how this may be done: some take a passage from Holy Scripture; some read and meditate on the life of the Lord and His Saints; some take the meditations of St Augustine, St Bernard or St Anselm;<sup>2</sup> some take meditations composed by holy and devout persons; some become involved in works of spiritual and corporal mercy; some participate in the Divine Office either because of an obligation or out of devotion; in doing this some prefer to say the Office of Our Lady or the Rosary or the Crown; others say the Crown of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or the *Our Fathers* of the Passion and the Precious Blood; others read the Psalter; others consider some Festival; some recite the Seven Psalms; some recite the Gradual

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. RNB 10, 8-9, FA:ED, 1, p 105.

<sup>2</sup> There were well known texts that were available in many editions.

Psalms; some the Office of the Dead; some say some approved prayers. Thus there are various ways to arouse devotion of spirit.<sup>1</sup>

**4619** I say that there four things that arouse the soul.

Firstly, after you have recited or carried out one or two of the above mentioned devotions, or when you have the opportunity, either because of an obligation or out of devotion, which should never be neglected since often if vocal prayer is neglected mental prayer is dissipated, you should make a mental resolution, each day or on a specific occasion, not to commit any kind of sin especially sins which you know you might easily commit that day. If it happens that you do fall, resolve to go to Confession with the purpose of never committing that sin again. Make a daily resolution to encourage yourself to<sup>2</sup> acquire merit and virtue.

Secondly I say that perseverance is needed to produce truly excellent fruit and one should never omit celebrating or attending at holy Mass, which is so important because it is the mystery of our salvation. When it is celebrated or attended with devotion it produces the most outstanding devotion.

Thirdly, as often as possible go to Confession and Communion since a person who regularly approaches these Sacraments will be given the fire of divine love in his heart. If a person says that he is not worthy to receive Communion that often, I say that he is not worthy to receive it on rare occasions. However, if you are unworthy go to Communion so you may become worthy by means of divine grace.<sup>3</sup>

**4620** Fourthly, some people have neither the time, the opportunity nor habit of performing these exercises because they are variously occupied in the activity and business of the world. Therefore I say to such as these that they should at least be taught to pray that God will deign to give them the grace to have the time, opportunity and habit of knowing, loving and serving Him, with their whole heart. In any case they should say:

“Ah Lord, forgive me and grant me the grace to recognise my sins, to have contrition, and to make a good Confession, offer satisfaction and make proper amendment.

I ask You this through Your mercy, the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and through the merits of the glorious Virgin Mary, His Mother, and through the merits of all Your Saints so that You may be given honour, glory, blessing and praise for ever and ever.

Ah Lord, because of Your charity do not abandon us. I offer You my soul my heart, my body and my life. *Amen.*”

*2. Short method of praying based on the shedding  
of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**4621** For the first shedding of blood offer an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary*. Pray for all the people who are in a bad situation, such as the infidels, schismatics and heretics, tepid sinners and the negligent, so that the Divine Majesty, by means of the merits and

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<sup>1</sup> This is a list of widely circulating devotions. The devotions to the Passion and to the Blood of Christ were zealously propagated by the author. Cf. IFC, II, 457, doc. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Di* in the text = *in*.

<sup>3</sup> The author is demonstrating that he is an advocate of frequent Communion.

power of the blood which Christ shed at the circumcision, would humble these sinners so that may observe in a committed and true manner the divine law and the Catholic truth as taught by the holy mother Roman Church which is the Spouse of Christ and head of all the Churches in the world.

**4622** For the second time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all those who are in a good situation, who observe the law of Christ, who obey the Catholic truth of the holy Roma Church, for those who do good, for those who have good will and finally for all who are in the state of grace that the divine Majesty would deign, through the merits of the blood that Christ shed in prayer, would grant them constancy in not falling and the strength to persevere to the end to which they aspire.

**4623** For the third time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all those who are in a state of hostility, conflict, discord, contention and confrontation, such as those who think, speak and act with evil intent against each other, that the divine Majesty, through the power of the blood that Christ shed at the column, may deign to give these people union, concord and Christian peace.

**4624** For the fourth time Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all who are in a state of peace, love and Christian harmony, that the divine Majesty, through the power of the blood that Christ shed during the crowning with thorns, would grant that their love for God and their neighbour would grow from strength to strength.

**4625** For the fifth time Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all those who are undergoing tribulation, sufferings and affliction because of war, famine, illness, poverty, imprisonment, captivity at the hands of the infidels and for all who are in want and trouble that the divine Majesty, by the power of the blood that Christ shed while carrying the cross on His shoulder, would deign to give them consolation in their afflictions, patience in their suffering and strong tolerance to support the salutary cross of their adversities.

**4626** For the sixth time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* for all those who are enjoying prosperity, wealth, pleasure and the comforts of earthly consolation, that the divine Majesty deign, through the power of the blood that Christ shed when He was stripped, to strip them of all pleasures of the flesh, inordinate love, honours, wealth, knowledge, human esteem, clothes, food, drink and every sensual and carnal appetite.

**4627** For the seventh time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for the most holy Father, for the illustrious Cardinals, for the most reverend Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops and for all the Prelates of the Holy Roman Church, that the divine Majesty would deign, through the power and merit of the blood that flowed from Christ's right hand, to give grace to those in authority as the right hand of the Church that as Christ has called and commissioned them they may work with justice, sanctity and perfection.

**4628** For the eighth time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for his Majesty the Emperor, his Highness the King, their worships the leaders, the Lord Princes and for all the illustrious Lords and excellencies, for magistrates, for Governors of the Empire, Kingdoms, States and Christian Republics, that the divine Majesty would deign, through the blood that flowed from Christ's left



hand, that the authority which they hold as temporal luminaries of God's Church would be exercised with peace, union and concord among themselves.

**4629** For the ninth time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all spiritual persons, such as men and women religious and everyone who is dedicated to divine worship, that the divine Majesty would deign, by the power of the blood which Christ shed from His right foot, to grant them the grace and strength to observe the rules and instructions of their Institutes so that they might be a shining example to Christ's faithful.

**4630** For the tenth time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for those who are joined in holy Matrimony or who are holy widows or living in continence, that the divine Majesty, through the power and merits of Christ's blood that flowed from His left foot would deign to grant them grace to arrange everything that they do for the honour and glory of God and their salvation.

**4631** For the eleventh time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all our friends and enemies, as well as for those who love us in Christ, those for whom we have been asked to pray, those we are obliged to pray for, for those who have received graces and benefits, for those who have taught us sound doctrine and who have set us a good example. This is the appropriate time for us to pray for those whom we have offended in thought, word or deed or to whom we have given bad example which led them into sin, and also for those who have offended us, that, by the power and strength of the blood that flowed from Christ's side, the divine Majesty would deign to grant that we should love Christ and our friends and enemies as we love ourselves as Your Majesty has taught us by word and example.

**4632** For the twelfth and last time that Christ shed blood say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* and pray to God for all those souls who are in Purgatory, that by the power of all the blood that Christ shed on the cross and when He was placed in the tomb, the divine Majesty would deign to have mercy on them and give rest to the souls of all the faithful, our fathers and mothers, family, friends and benefactors so that they may soon be free from punishment and go to glorify Your divine Majesty in their heavenly home, where You live and reign forever and ever with the Saints and Blessed Ministering Spirits of the glorious God.

### 3. A short meditation on the Hail Mary.

**4633** Oh blessed and glorious Virgin seeing that the Angel messenger of the great God uttered the sweet word *Ave* to you, meaning the he was the messenger of the most holy Trinity, announcing the salvation of the world and subtracting the *Vae* (Woe) of the great sadness and misfortune of God's anger which raged against the human race, I therefore ask you to deign to ask God's Majesty to bestow the saving *Ave* of eternal peace and salvation on poor sinners so that we might be set free from the condemning *Vae* (Woe) and the heavy sadness of God's justice<sup>1</sup> that we merited and still merit because of our iniquity.

*Full of grace*

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<sup>1</sup> In the Assisi ms *giustizia* has been changed to *giusta tua ira*.

O blessed and glorious Virgin you were told that you were *Full of Grace*, that you were full of all graces that were fitting for the Mother of God, therefore I beg of you to ask of God's divine Majesty remission of our sins and that He grant us His grace so that so that we may be always thankful in life<sup>1</sup> and death.

*The Lord is with you*

**4634** O blessed and glorious Virgin you were told that with His divine authority the Lord was with you strengthening you with power, enlightening you with wisdom, glorifying you with goodness, therefore I ask you, blessed Virgin, that you deign to beg God's Majesty not to abandon us because of our lack of merit, but that He deign to come to us so that we may be strengthened against all evil, shrewd enough to choose what is good and upright in persevering in holy virtue. //

*Blessed are you among women.*

O blessed Virgin you were told that you had been blessed beyond all other women since you were a virgin and fertile, married and an intact mother, spouse of the Holy Spirit, and therefore I beg of you to pray<sup>2</sup> to the Majesty of God so that He will free us from the punishment of Hell, and the devil's curse so that we may be blessed with heavenly blessings.

*Blessed is the fruit of your womb*

**4635** Oh blessed Virgin you were told that the fruit of your virginal womb and intact abdomen was blessed, since it was united to God's divinity, therefore I beg that you deign to pray to God's Majesty that He free us from all vice and useless activity and grant us the grace to bear the fruit of true holiness and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS

Oh blessed Virgin you were told that our Saviour should be known by the saving name of Jesus. I beg you to pray to God's Majesty to grant us the grace of always having Jesus in our hearts, on our lips and in our actions: in our hearts so that we may know and love Him from the heart; on our lips [so that we may confess Him through faith and praise and honour Him in our actions]<sup>3</sup>, so that we might imitate Him and obey Him.

*Holy*

**4636** Oh blessed and glorious Virgin, you were predestined, chosen and preselected, conceived and born in holiness with which you were made holy in soul and body, in life and in death, on earth and in heaven. I ask you through the merits of your holiness that you beg God's Majesty to free us from all concupiscence, vice and temptations of the flesh.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vita* has been added in the margin.

<sup>2</sup> *Pregar* has been added in the margin.

<sup>3</sup> These words are taken from the edition in the *Analecta Ordinis*. They had been missing from the Assisi ms by mistake.

## MARIA

Oh blessed and glorious Virgin you were told, *that He who is* was given this glorious name, which is an ocean of all created perfection, whether infused or acquired. Therefore I beg you through the merits of your holy name to ask grace from God's Majesty that we might be freed from the tempestuous ocean of this world and its most dangerous imperfections. //

### *Mother of God*

**4637** Oh blessed Virgin you were and are truly the Mother of God the Word who became flesh for us. Therefore I ask you through the merits of your motherhood to ask God's Majesty to free us from the deceit and trickery of the devil so that we might be your true children and brothers of Jesus Christ.

### *Pray for us*

Oh blessed and glorious Virgin you were always grateful to God's Majesty for all the gifts, graces and benefits that He bestowed on you, ask God's Majesty to free us from all ingratitude and to grant us grace to always be grateful for all the benefits that He has given us in thought, word and deed.

### *Now and forever*

**4638** Oh blessed and glorious Virgin for the whole of your grace-filled and blessed life you remained free from Original Sin, mortal and venial sin and without the possibility of sinning, therefore I ask you to deign to pray to God's Majesty to free us from all guilt of mortal sin, past, present and future.

### *Now and at the hour of our death*

Oh blessed and glorious Virgin at the time of your death you were consoled by Christ, by the Angels and by the Apostles and reassured of the blessed possession of eternal life and a heavenly home to which you were gloriously assumed body and soul. I ask you that you would deign to implore God's Majesty to free us at the end of our life both from all danger of hell and all punishment of eternal death.

### *Amen*

**4639** Oh Blessed Virgin the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were at work in you. They crowned you with the essence of glory, consubstantial and accidental beyond the Saints and Hierarchies of angels. The Father crowned you as His beloved daughter, the Son as His dear Mother and the Holy Spirit as His sweetest spouse. Therefore I ask that you deign to implore the Majesty of God that on judgement day He would grant grace to our soul, as someone who the Father loves, as a friend of His Son and as most pleasing to the Holy Spirit, to be bodily assumed into heavenly glory where I could always behold and enjoy Him with you and all the Saints forever and ever.  
*Amen.*