

Chapter 9

Means of Spiritual Growth

The spiritual life, which consists fundamentally in sanctifying grace made operative by the virtue of charity and the other virtues imperated by charity, is a positive, dynamic reality. But the life of grace and charity is received into a human nature wounded by original sin and strongly inclined to self-centered love and the works of the flesh. Therefore, St. Thomas states that "at first it is incumbent on man to occupy himself chiefly with avoiding sin and resisting his concupiscences, which move him in opposition to charity."⁽¹⁾

But ***purgation and mortification are not ends in themselves; they are simply the means of removing the obstacles to the growth of grace and charity.*** They comprise what St. Paul describes as putting off the old man of Adam and sin, and putting on the new man, Jesus Christ, who is the perfect man. But to put on Christ and to grow in his likeness require the use of positive means by which grace and charity can reach their full expansion and intensity. ***These positive means can be divided into the three principal ones that are necessary for all Christians -- the sacraments, meritorious good works, and the prayer of petition -- and certain secondary aids to growth in holiness.***

It should be noted at the outset that there is a marked difference in the efficacy of the three principal means by which grace and charity are increased. ***The sacraments are the most efficacious, for they produce their effects ex opere operato,*** that is, they infallibly produce grace in those who receive the sacraments with the proper dispositions. ***The other two means -- meritorious good works and the prayer of petition -- produce their effects ex opere operantis,*** that is, their efficacy depends on the dispositions of the human agent, working under the impetus of grace and relying on God's benevolent love.

If we were to arrange these three means in the order of their efficacy, we would list first the sacraments, then meritorious good works, and finally the prayer of petition. Without in any way disdaining good works and the prayer of petition, we recall the words of the Fathers of Vatican Council II: "It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the faithful should easily understand the sacramental signs, and should eagerly frequent those sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life."⁽²⁾

The Sacraments

Traditionally the sacraments have been described as sensible signs instituted by Christ to bestow grace on those who receive them. As the Word made flesh, and therefore a visible sign of the Father's love for us, and as the Mediator and the Source of the life of grace, ***Jesus Christ is the first and greatest sacrament.*** Christian spirituality is a sharing in the mystery of Christ, indeed, in the life that is Christ; the sacraments are instruments of the divine power of Christ, effecting grace in the recipient through the merits of his passion and death.

The sacraments are signs or symbols that actually effect what they signify, and what they signify constitutes the reality of the life of grace. The sign alone, such as the pouring of water,

anointing with oil, or sharing in bread and wine, could mean many things, but when ***these signs are true sacraments, they have a meaning, a relationship to a reality that was specified by Christ himself.***

The sign or action passes, but the reality of the effect, the grace received through the merits of Christ, remains. The sacraments, like the deeds of Christ, retain their sanctifying power for all time. Thus, the Council of Trent solemnly affirmed that the sacraments of the New Law ***confer, grace ex opere operato, that is, by their own intrinsic power***, so long as the recipient places no obstacle to the reception of grace.⁽³⁾

In view of the foregoing, we can also describe the sacraments as actions of Christ in and through the Church for the bestowal of grace on those who accept him in faith. We emphasize the phrase "in and through the Church" because Vatican Council II did not hesitate to say that "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament -- a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men."⁽⁴⁾ ***It is in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, that "the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification."***⁽⁵⁾

This statement has several important pastoral implications: (1) In her sacramental actions the Church does and wills what Christ does and wills, because the Church as holy is united with Christ, and ***because he gave the Church authority over the administration of the sacraments.*** (2) All apostolate and ministry, even the lofty mission of preaching the Gospel, should lead people to the sacraments, which are, within the framework of the liturgy, ***"the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper."***⁽⁶⁾ (3) ***The Church as sacrament***, and as commissioned by Christ to bring all peoples to him through the sacraments, ***serves as a basis for determining the essence and goal of priestly ministry.***

On the part of the recipient, an understanding of the sacraments as points of contact with Christ can do much to dispel the notion that the sacramental signs and gestures are some kind of magic formula that works automatically. It may likewise help Christians to avoid a routine and monotonous reception of the sacraments, especially regrettable in the reception of the Eucharist and the sacrament of penance.

In theological terms we would say that the sacramental effect ex opere operato must be conjoined to the effect ex opere operantis. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the degree of grace received in the worthy reception of a sacrament will depend ultimately on the intensity and perfection of one's disposition.⁽⁷⁾ and since the moment for receiving grace is the moment of sacramental contact with Christ through the Church, one should strive to approach the sacraments with the greatest possible faith, devotion, and love.

Since the sacraments are specific ways of participating in the mystery of Christ, the grace given through the sacraments should correspond to specific needs in the Christian life, and this should be signified by the matter and form of the sacrament. St. Thomas demonstrates that ***the grace***

flowing from each sacrament is a special grace proper to the sacrament in question, and that each sacrament corresponds to a particular need of the Christian as an individual or as a member of the Christian community.

The life of the spirit has a certain similarity to the life of the body, just as other corporeal things have a certain likeness to spiritual things. Now man is perfected in his bodily life in two ways: first, with respect to his own person; secondly, with respect to the whole social community in which he lives. With regard to his private self, man is perfected both directly, by acquiring some vital perfection, and indirectly, by removing sicknesses and the like, which are hindrances to his bodily life.

There are three ways by which the life of the body is directly perfected:

First, by generation, by which a man begins to exist and to live. Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is baptism, which, according to the Epistle to Titus (3:5), is a spiritual regeneration.

Secondly, by growth, by which one is brought to full size and strength. **Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is confirmation,** the sacrament in which the Holy Spirit is given to strengthen men. Because of this the disciples already baptized were told: "Wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Thirdly, by nourishment, which conserves a man's life and strength. **The Eucharist corresponds to this in the life of the spirit.** Thus Christ said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54).

If man's life, both bodily and spiritual, were inaccessible to harm, this would suffice. But **since man at times suffers infirmity, both bodily infirmity and the spiritual infirmity which is sin, he needs a cure for his malady, and this is twofold:**

One is the healing which restores health. And corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is penance, as Psalm 40:5 points out: "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."

The other cure is the restoration of former vigor by suitable exercise and diet. In the spiritual life the anointing corresponds to this, for it removes the remains of sin and prepares a man for his final glory. Hence in the Epistle of St. James (5:15) it is said: "If he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

With respect to the whole community, man is perfected in two ways:

First, by receiving the power to govern the community and to exercise public office. **In the life of the spirit the sacrament of holy orders** corresponds to this. As the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:27) points out, priests offer sacrifice not for themselves alone but for the people.

Secondly, by natural propagation. Both in the corporeal and in the spiritual order this is accomplished by matrimony, which is not only a sacrament but also a function of nature.**(8)**

Since our concern is primarily with the sacraments as positive means of personal growth in holiness, it is under this aspect that we shall now discuss each sacrament in particular.

Baptism

Baptism, the first sacrament instituted by Christ, constitutes a new birth into the life of grace, as Jesus declared in his statement to Nicodemus: "I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit. Flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit" (John 3:5-6). ***Baptism is par excellence the sacrament of faith,*** as is evident from the fact that Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations and to "baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

According to St. Paul, ***baptism is a dying in Christ and a resurrection in Christ to a new life*** (Rom. 6:3-11), signifying first of all the intimate union of the baptized with Christ's paschal mystery and secondly that, as a result of baptism, the Christian must be "dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). Finally, ***baptism signifies the incorporation of the Christian into Christ and his admission into the community of the people of God as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ*** (cf. Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Several points are worth noting in regard to ***the significance of baptism for one's growth in holiness.*** First, ***baptism is a commitment to a way of life*** and, as is evident in the baptism of adult converts, it means a conversion from the past to one's future as a member of Christ and of the people of God. Secondly, given our proneness to self-love and creature attachments, ***baptismal promises should be renewed,*** as is done in the liturgy for the Easter Vigil Mass. Baptism can be received only once, and it imprints a lasting spiritual character on the soul, but to remain faithful to the Christian way of life in the face of temptations requires a constant renewal of commitment.

Lastly, ***baptism bestows on the recipient the life of sanctifying grace, the infused theological and moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*** Thus, from the beginning the baptized Christian has all the supernatural powers that are needed to grow to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity. Rightly, then, did the Fathers of Vatican Council II state:

The followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God.⁽⁹⁾

Confirmation

Traditionally, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation have been considered the sacraments of initiation, although confirmation is also the development and further ratification of the effects of baptism. As in domestic life, so also in the Church and in the spiritual life, there is an extended period of infancy and childhood, during which the baptized Christian is protected, provided for, and educated in the faith; but on reaching sufficient maturity, the Christian must step forth as a responsible person in the Christian community and

give witness to his or her faith by a virtuous life. ***It is at this phase of development that the young adult receives the Holy Spirit***, is marked with the seal or character of the sacrament, and is "more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and by deed as a true witness of Christ."[\(10\)](#)

It is an article of faith that confirmation is a sacrament of the New Law, that it confers an indelible character on the soul, but ***it is not strictly necessary for salvation***.[\(11\)](#) The sacrament of confirmation stems from the promise of Christ to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) who will bear witness to Christ and will enable those who receive the Spirit to bear witness also (John 15:26). In Acts 8:15 ff., there is clear testimony that St. Peter and St. John imposed hands on some Samaritans who had been baptized previously, but in the primitive Church the sacrament of confirmation was considered a part of the rite of baptism, a practice still prevalent in the Eastern Church.

The soul receives at baptism the entire supernatural organism of the spiritual life, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but at confirmation the mission of the Holy Spirit is like a personal Pentecost wherein the soul receives the grace of fortitude to witness to the faith, to stand firm in the faith, and to defend the faith. Thus, Christ told the apostles just before his ascension to heaven: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Consequently, the sacrament of confirmation is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, in the sense that it involves a special mission of the Holy Spirit to the soul in grace, bestowing the particular grace or power proper to the sacrament as well as the permanent character.

In recent years great emphasis has been placed on the sacrament of confirmation as the sacrament of Catholic Action and the basis of the priesthood of the laity. Pope Pius XII was a great promoter of Catholic Action, for he was convinced that the Church needs witnesses even more than apologists. In a letter to the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon (1933) he stated:

In reality, it is the sacraments of baptism and confirmation themselves which impose, among other obligations, that of the apostolate; that is to say, the obligation of giving spiritual help to one's neighbor. It is true that by confirmation one becomes a soldier of Christ, and everybody recognizes that a soldier must bear fatigue and battle for others rather than himself. But, in a way that is much more hidden from the eyes of the uninstructed, baptism too imposes the duty of the apostolate, since by it we become members of the Church, that is to say, of the Mystical Body One member should aid the other; none can remain inactive; each should contribute in his own turn.

The apostolate, therefore, whether considered as the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or as evangelization, is the obligation of every baptized Christian, according to one's state of life, capabilities, and opportunities for apostolic action. This is evident once we grasp the notion that ***apostolate comprises any work or deed by which we bring God to souls and souls to God***. Since all moral activity is specified by its end or goal, authentically apostolic works must always be orientated, directly or indirectly, to the spiritual order, that is, the extension of God's kingdom, the salvation of souls, and the attainment of the perfection of the Christian life. The Fathers of

the Second Vatican Council have made some clear and challenging statements on apostolic activity:

The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of "apostolate"; the Church exercises it through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation "to the apostolate as well."[\(12\)](#)

The work of Christ's redemption concerns essentially the salvation of men; it takes in also, however, the renewal of the whole temporal order. The mission of the Church, consequently, is not only to bring men the message and grace of Christ but also to permeate and improve the whole range of the temporal

The apostolate of the Church therefore, and of each of its members, aims primarily at announcing to the world by word and action the message of Christ and communicating to it the grace of Christ. The principal means of bringing this about is the ministry of the word and of the sacraments. Committed in a special way to the clergy, it leaves room however for a highly important part for the laity, the part namely of "helping the cause of truth" (3 John 8). It is in this sphere most of all that the lay apostolate and the pastoral ministry complete each other.

Laymen have countless opportunities for exercising the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very witness of a Christian life and the good works done in a supernatural spirit are effective in drawing men to the faith and to God The witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them to the faith, or ***to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, incite them to a more fervent life***

That men, working in harmony, should renew the temporal order and make it increasingly more perfect: such is God's design for the world

Pastors have the duty to set forth clearly the principles concerning the purpose of creation and the use to be made of the world, and to provide moral and spiritual helps for the renewal of the temporal order in Christ. Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order. Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, prompted by Christian love, they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner.[\(13\)](#)

The priesthood of the laity is also rooted in baptism and reaffirmed in confirmation, and the Fathers of Vatican II insisted that since all Christians are members of the Mystical Body of Christ, "all the faithful are made a holy and kingly priesthood."[\(14\)](#) Nevertheless, the lay priesthood and the ministerial priesthood "differ essentially and not only in degree," though they complement each other and ***"each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ."***[\(15\)](#)

Although there are various opinions concerning the nature of the priesthood of the laity, it would seem that ***the cultic or sacrificial aspect of the lay priesthood consists in the offering of themselves and their actions -- spiritual sacrifices -- to God through Jesus Christ.*** This is indicated in the statement of St. Paul: "And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1). But the "ministry" of the lay priesthood, wherein it cooperates closely with the ministerial priesthood, is in the area of apostolic action and doctrinal evangelization. This would seem to be the teaching of the Fathers of Vatican Council II, who connect the priesthood of the laity with the apostolate:

The laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have, therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God. In the concrete, their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men; it is exercised too when they endeavor to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears clear witness to Christ and helps forward the salvation of men. The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, laymen are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world. [\(16\)](#)

The Eucharist

The Eucharist may be considered under two aspects: as sacrament and as sacrifice. The Eucharist as sacrifice is the Mass, and the Mass is substantially the same sacrifice as that of Calvary: the same victim, the same oblation, the same priest. Such is the teaching of the Council of Trent:

In the divine sacrifice that is offered in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is present and is offered in an unbloody manner For it is one and the same victim: he who now makes the offering through the ministry of priests and he who then offered himself on the Cross; ***the only difference is in the manner of offering.*** The benefits of this oblation are received in abundance through this unbloody oblation. [\(17\)](#)

The event that reveals the true meaning of the Last Supper and the Eucharist that was instituted there is the Sacrifice of the Cross, which changed the Passover from a memorial meal to a true sacrifice. Thus, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

In 1967 the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued an instruction concerning the Eucharist, [\(18\)](#) and it contains numerous statements that are of help in understanding the nature and purpose of the Eucharist. It begins by stating that "the mystery of the Eucharist is the true center for

the sacred liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life." Then, touching upon the doctrinal principles that have been further developed in recent years, the instruction emphasizes the following conclusions: ***(1) the Mass is a sacrifice*** in which the sacrifice of the Cross, is perpetuated; it is a memorial of the death and Resurrection of the Lord; it is a sacred banquet in which the people of God share the benefits of the Paschal Sacrifice; ***(2) in the Mass, therefore, sacrifice and sacred meal are linked together by the closest bond, so much so that the Mass may be described as a "sacrificial meal"***; the Lord entrusted this sacrifice to the Church so that the faithful might share in it spiritually (through faith and charity) and sacramentally, through the reception of Communion; ***(3) the eucharistic sacrifice is the source and the summit of the Church's worship and of the Christian life***; ***(4) the faithful participate more fully*** in this sacrament of thanksgiving, propitiation, petition, and praise not only ***when they offer the victim and themselves to the Father***, but when they receive this victim in Communion; ***(5) the mystery of the Eucharist consists in its fullness not only in the celebration of Mass but in devotion to the sacred species reserved on the altar***. From these basic statements the instruction then proceeds to lay down specific regulations concerning the Eucharist, but since they pertain to the pastoral and liturgical aspects, of Mass and Eucharist, it is not necessary for us to discuss them. Rather, we shall make some observations on ***the four purposes and effects of the Mass***.

Since the Mass is substantially the same sacrifice as that of Christ on the Cross, it has the same purposes and produces the same effects. ***The first is adoration, and this effect is always produced ex opere operato*** because of the infinite dignity of the principal priest, who is Christ, and because of the infinite worth of the victim of sacrifice, who is also Christ. ***There is no greater way of giving honor and glory*** to God than by offering to him his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. This fact alone should call forth the greatest possible reverence and devotion of the priest who celebrates the Mass and the faithful who participate in it.

After adoration, there is no obligation more pressing than that ***of reparation for sin***. In this sense the value of the Mass is unsurpassed in making atonement for our own sins and the sins of others, since in this eucharistic sacrifice we offer to the heavenly Father the redemptive action of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. ***But the reparatory effects of the Mass are applied to us only in accordance with our dispositions***. Hence, we can receive from the Mass, unless we place an obstacle to it, the actual grace to repent of our sins; indeed there is no more efficacious means for obtaining the conversion of sinners. Secondly, ***the Mass will remit, if there is no obstacle, at least part of the temporal punishment due to sin***. From this stems the great value of the Mass as a suffrage for the souls in purgatory, who can do nothing to help themselves since they are beyond the stage of meriting. Confessors should also consider imposing on their penitents the sacramental penance of having a Mass offered in reparation for their sins.

As children of the heavenly Father, we should go to him with our petitions. But in the Mass, Jesus is always making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25), supporting our ***petitions*** by his infinite merits. Without disdaining other spiritual exercises and devotions, which produce their effects ***ex opere operantis***, pastors and preachers should educate the faithful concerning the incomparable impetratory power of the Mass. ***Of all the forms of liturgical prayer, that of petition is the most frequent, and when our petitions are joined to the prayers of the Church and the worshipping***

community at Mass, blending with the intercessory prayer of Christ our Priest and Redeemer, how can the heavenly Father fail to grant our lawful requests?

The fourth value or function of the Mass is thanksgiving. We owe a debt of thanks to God that can never be adequately repaid, but just as we needed the Son of God to atone for our sins and intercede for us, so we can call upon this same Mediator to return thanks to the Father. If, in offering a Mass for a particular intention, we have called upon Christ to plead for us with the Father, we should feel obliged by a sense of gratitude to offer another Mass in thanksgiving through the same Christ our Lord. Together with adoration, thanksgiving constitutes a foretaste of glory, where all the blessed for all eternity are occupied with praise and thanksgiving to the Trinity.

In speaking of the Eucharist as sacrament, Vatican Council II states:

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister,... but especially in the eucharistic species ***The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.*** For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper.(19)

The faithful achieve a more perfect participation in the Mass when, with proper dispositions, they receive the body of the Lord sacramentally in the Mass itself, in obedience to his words, "take and eat."(20)

For the faithful and the celebrant, therefore, the culmination of the Mass is reception of Holy Communion. It is in every sense of the word an incorporation into Christ, who comes to us in this sacrament. Through the gift of sanctifying grace, the individual Christian share's in the very nature and life of God and is thereby a dwelling-place of the three Persons of the Trinity. ***Worthy Communion increases sanctifying grace in the soul of the recipient*** and thus produces a new mission of the Holy Spirit and greater receptivity to the, indwelling Trinity.

Some manuals of sacramental theology emphasize the distinction between ***sacrament*** and ***sacrifice*** in the Eucharist; but, various statements of the Church during and since Vatican Council II urge us to reunite these two aspects and to see the Mass, and Communion as a ***sacrificial meal***. The words of consecration are words, that bespeak a sacrifice -- a body that is broken and blood that, is shed -- and the consuming of the victim as food for the spiritual nourishment of Christians is also a sacrificial act. ***In the reception of Communion the priesthood of the laity is admitted to its highest cultic or liturgical act.*** It should be evident from the foregoing that ***the Christian life is eminently eucharistic***: incorporation in Christ who comes to us under the sacramental species.

For the worthy reception of Communion, it is necessary, as remote dispositions, that one be in the state of grace and have the right intention. The first is necessary because the Eucharist is a sacrament of the living; the second is required because the worthy reception of any sacrament demands sufficient knowledge and proper intention .(21)

But since the grace received from Communion depends ultimately on the dispositions of the recipient, ***it is also necessary to make a proximate preparation for receiving the Eucharist. The first requisite is faith***, and for this reason, after the consecration of the sacred species, the celebrant of the Mass invites the congregation in the words: "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith." St. Thomas points out that on the Cross the divinity of Christ was hidden, but on the altar and in the Eucharist even his sacred humanity is veiled from our eyes. It is truly a sacrament of faith.

Secondly, one should approach the Eucharist with profound reverence and deep humility. Therefore, just before receiving Communion, we say: "Lord, I am not worthy." If the Virgin Mary proclaimed her lowliness as handmaid of the Lord before receiving into her womb the Word made flesh, and if she again confessed her humble state in the Magnificat, how much more should we sinners approach the immaculate Lamb with reverence and humility.

Thirdly, one should receive the eucharistic Lord with loving confidence, trusting in the infinite love and mercy of the eucharistic Heart of Jesus who came among us precisely to redeem and save us. As our Good Shepherd he will welcome us with joy and take us in his arms to shield us from danger and comfort us with his tender love.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of cultivating the proper dispositions for the fruitful reception of Communion. Indeed, since the moment of grace is the moment of contact with the sacramental matter and form, preparation for Communion is much more necessary and more important than thanksgiving after Communion. However, since Christ is present as long as the sacramental species remain, ***it would be irreverent not to spend at least that time in prayerful thanksgiving and recollection***. What better opportunity is offered us for presenting our numerous petitions to the good Jesus as when he is tabernacled within us? Since the Church has legislated that we should normally receive Communion within the Mass and has also stipulated that there be a period of silent prayer after Communion, ***priests should be considerate in allowing this time of thanksgiving to the congregation before ending the Mass***.

Although in modern times the ease and frequency for receiving sacramental Communion have resulted in less emphasis on the practice of spiritual Communion, it is nevertheless a praiseworthy devotion. ***The Council of Trent had stated that there are three ways of receiving the Eucharist: sacramentally only, spiritually only, and both sacramentally and spiritually.***⁽²²⁾ The first case would apply to sinners who receive Communion, lacking grace and charity; the second case applies to those who with a living faith that works through charity express a fervent desire to receive the Eucharist; ***lastly***, they receive the Eucharist both sacramentally and spiritually who receive Communion with the proper dispositions of faith, charity, and devotion. All worthy Communions are spiritual, and even when the Communion is spiritual but not sacramental, it receives its value from its orientation to sacramental Communion. ***The effects of spiritual Communion depend on the intensity of one's faith and the fervor of one's love for the Blessed Sacrament (ex opere operantis)***, and it is an excellent way of uniting oneself with the eucharistic Lord and with the Masses being offered throughout the world to the glory and praise of the Father.

Penance

The sacrament of penance has been called a "second baptism," but a difficult and sometimes painful one because of the need to acknowledge one's sin, do penance, and amend one's life. Christ gave his apostles, and through them their successors, the power to forgive sins. Thus, the Council of Trent affirmed that Christ instituted the sacrament of penance particularly at the time when, after rising from the dead, he breathed upon his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit; for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (John 20:23).

In instituting the sacrament of penance, Christ did not specify in particular the integral parts of the sacrament or the formula of absolution. This is determined by the Church, although the Council of Trent specified that contrition, confession, and satisfaction are, by divine institution (ex Dei institutione), necessary for the full and perfect remission of sins.(23)

Moreover, the same Council declared that the priest must make a judgment concerning the sins committed, which he cannot do unless he knows the sins; therefore the integral confession of one's sins was also instituted by Christ, and the Council refers to James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; and Luke 5:14; 17:14.

The sacrament of penance has both a personal and a communal aspect. So far as it relates to the individual penitent, it calls for conversion from sin (*metanoia*) and the resolve to amend one's life; as regards the Christian community, it signifies that the sinner, now forgiven, has been reconciled with the people of God. But conversion from sin and forgiveness are not granted without repentance. Consequently, the actuation of the virtue of penitence provides the necessary dispositions for worthy reception of the sacrament of penance.

The virtue of penitence or repentance includes sorrow for one's past sins as offenses against God and the resolve not to sin again. It comprises the second act required for the sacrament, namely contrition, and it also connotes conversion of life or metanoia. As St. Thomas says: "Penitence is not considered a special virtue only because it grieves over evil committed -- charity would suffice for this -- but because the penitent grieves over sin committed as it is an offense against God and because he has the purpose of amendment."[\(24\)](#)

Since ***the acts of contrition, confession, and satisfaction constitute the proximate matter of the sacrament of penance,*** the virtue of penitence is not only a necessary disposition for worthy reception of the sacrament; it is also an essential or integral part of the sacrament itself. ***It will admit of varying degrees of intensity, however, and the more perfect it is, the better disposed is the recipient to receive more graces through the sacrament.***

An intense and universal sorrow for sin can obtain for the soul not only forgiveness of all sins and remission of the temporal punishment due to them, but also a considerable increase in sanctifying grace, thus raising the soul to a higher degree of holiness. It is important to realize that on regaining the state of grace in the sacrament of penance, one does not receive grace in the same degree as possessed prior to mortal sin, but according to one's actual disposition in receiving the sacrament.[\(25\)](#)

As regards conversion of life, if the purpose of amendment is lacking, the confession is invalid; and theologians generally list three qualities as essential: it must be a firm determination here and now not to sin again; it must be efficacious, that is, a willingness to use the usual safeguards against sin and avoid the occasions of sin; and it must be universal, that is, a resolve to avoid all mortal sins: Persons who normally confess only venial sins or absolved mortal sins of the past should be especially careful to avoid routine and mechanical confession of sins without a purpose of amendment. As we have said, ***the lack of a firm purpose of amendment invalidates the sacrament.***

In addition to having sorrow for sin and the firm purpose of amendment, the penitent should prepare for confession by an adequate examination of conscience. By Church law, "penitents must disclose in confession all the mortal sins of which they are conscious after a diligent examination of conscience, even if these sins be most hidden and committed against the last two commandments only. Moreover, even those circumstances that change the species of the sin must be mentioned in confession."⁽²⁶⁾

Mortal sins already forgiven and actual venial sins are considered "free matter" for confession; that is, ***the penitent may renew sorrow for forgiven mortal sins and may confess only predominant or noteworthy venial sins.*** The reason for this is that such penitents are already in the state of grace and hence their confessions are called ***"confessions of devotion."*** Two things should be noted about the repetition of absolved mortal sins: (1) for persons who are weak in virtue the recollection may be the occasion of a temptation to sin again, particularly if it is a sin of sensuality; (2) persons who tend to be scrupulous or are easily put in a state of doubt and anxiety should not normally confess mortal sins that have been confessed and forgiven. God forgives and forgets, ***as Jeremiah says: "I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).***

The examination of conscience should be made with the greatest sincerity and humility, with a serene and impartial spirit, without excusing our defects and without straining scrupulously to see faults where there are none. The time given to this examination will vary with the frequency of one's confessions, the need of the soul, and the degree of perfection of the soul at any given time. ***An excellent means of simplifying this task is to make a daily examination of conscience and to note especially those things that must be subjected to the confessor in the tribunal of penance.*** If one does this daily, it will take but a few moments to make a mental review before approaching confession. Moreover, this procedure has the advantage of keeping one's faults in mind during the week and of avoiding the anxiety that would be caused by forgetting to mention some sin at the time of confession.

But it is especially important that one should not lose oneself in a multitude of unnecessary details. It is of much more importance to be able to discover the cause of distractions in prayer than to be able to recall the exact number of times that one was distracted. Some would endeavor to do the impossible in seeking mathematical precision regarding the number of venial sins or imperfections, when it would be much more profitable for them to attack the causes of these sins directly rather than to spend so much time counting the external manifestations. This is to be understood, naturally, in regard to venial sins, because if it is a question of grave sins, it is necessary to confess the number exactly, or with the greatest possible precision.

There is no doubt that confession made with the foregoing conditions is of a great efficacy in the sanctification of the soul. ***The following are the effects of such a worthy confession:***

1. The Blood of Christ has fallen upon the soul to purify and sanctify it. Therefore, the saints who received the most vivid light concerning the infinite value of the redeeming Blood of Jesus had a veritable ***hunger and thirst for receiving sacramental absolution.***
2. ***Grace is increased in us,*** but in different degrees, according to the disposition of the penitent. Of one hundred persons who have received absolution from the same faults, there may not be two who have received grace in the same degree. It will depend on the intensity of their repentance and the degree of humility with which they have approached the sacrament.
3. ***The soul is filled with peace and consolation,*** a great help for making progress on the road to perfection.
4. ***Greater lights are received concerning the ways of God.*** Thus, after a worthy confession we understand more clearly the necessity of forgiving injuries, seeing how mercifully the Lord has pardoned us; or we understand with greater clarity the malice of venial sin, which is a stain that deprives the soul of some of its brilliance and beauty.
5. ***It increases considerably the powers of the soul*** by imparting the energy and the strength to conquer temptations and the fortitude to fulfill one's duties perfectly.

Anointing

The Catholic Church professes and teaches that the sacred anointing of the sick is one of the seven sacraments of the New Testament, that it was instituted by Christ and that it is alluded to in Mark 6:13 and recommended and promulgated to the faithful by James the Apostle and brother of the Lord. "If any one of you is ill," he says, "he should send for the elders of the Church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15.) [\(27\)](#)

Since the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution and the revision of the Roman Ritual, the sacrament may be now administered as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from illness or old age. Accordingly, Vatican Council II has stated: "Extreme unction, which may also and more fittingly be called 'anointing of the sick,' is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the appropriate time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived." [\(28\)](#)

The reform of the sacrament of anointing reflects at once a return to the original Christian practice (there is no mention of danger of death in the Epistle of St. James) and also a more maternal concern of the Church for those who are seriously ill or incapacitated by old age.

Moreover, the sick give witness to other Christians of that which is inevitable -- death -- and of the ***unum necessarium***: salvation through the merits of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. They can also sanctify their suffering and pain by uniting themselves with the crucified Christ and the Sorrowful Mother, a very helpful way to share in the mystery of Christ. Or they can offer their sufferings as atonement for their own sins and the sins of others, something all the sick would do eagerly if they could fully realize the suffering of the souls in purgatory. It is in the last sense that ***some authors have spoken of the sacrament of anointing as the completion of the sacrament of penance***, since it has as one of its purposes to rid the soul of the remnants of sin and thus liberate the soul completely.

For the Christian, pain and suffering are sanctified and transformed by the virtue of hope which rests on faith in Christ Jesus, who said: "I tell you truly: you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve for a time, but your grief will be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

The aging have a special problem, for they may be perfectly healthy; they are not, like the sick, hoping to return to their former condition; ***they have reached a point of no return***. Not only that, but the aged feel isolated, left out of community life and sharing. At the same time, the aged have a grace-filled opportunity to grow in wisdom and in humility based on truth and self-acceptance. ***Their very isolation enables them to accept the two ultimate realities of life: God and self***. From this comes a self-affirmation that gives peace and a deep trust in God's loving providence. Then death is seen as the transit to the fulfillment of all that they have worked for and loved in this life. "I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us. Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:18-19).

Matrimony

In discussing the last two sacraments -- matrimony and holy orders -- we are dealing with sacraments that are ***especially communal or social in their orientation***.

The first chapters of Genesis reveal to us God's plan in the creation of man and woman and likewise the purposes of their conjugal union. It follows from this divine instruction that ***matrimony is the natural and normal vocation for every man and woman. There are always those who for one reason or another will choose a celibate life, but the first presumption should always be for marriage***. Thus, anyone who takes a vow or makes a promise to lead a celibate life should have positive reasons for so doing; conversely, a person who enters the married state should have the qualities and dispositions necessary for conjugal life and possible parenthood.

In the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* the Fathers of Vatican Council II devoted an entire chapter to marriage and the family.

God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view: all of these have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of every member of the family, on the dignity, stability, peace, and prosperity of the family, and of the whole human race.

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. Thus the man and woman, who "are no longer two but one" (Matt. 19:6), help and serve each other by their marriage partnership; they become conscious of their unity and experience it more deeply from day to day. The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them.

Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of divine love and modeled on Christ's own union with the Church. Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage. He abides with them in order that by their mutual self-giving spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity, as he loved the Church and delivered himself for it. Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church, with the result that the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as fathers and mothers. Spouses, therefore, are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament; fulfilling their conjugal and family role by virtue of this sacrament, ***spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, and their whole life is suffused by faith, hope, and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and their mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God***

Married love is an eminently human love because it is an affection between two persons rooted in the will and it embraces the good of the whole person; it can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with a unique dignity, and ennoble them as the special elements and signs of the friendship proper to marriage. The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on it, has restored, perfected, and elevated it. A love like that, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual giving of self, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeates their whole lives; besides, this love is actually developed and increased by the exercise of it

Married love is uniquely expressed and perfected by the exercise of the acts proper to marriage. Hence the acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude. Endorsed by mutual fidelity and, above all, consecrated by Christ's sacrament, this love abides faithfully in mind and body in prosperity and adversity and hence excludes both adultery and divorce. The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection. Outstanding courage is required for the constant fulfillment of the duties of this Christian calling; spouses, therefore, will need grace for leading a holy life: they will eagerly practice a love that is firm, generous, and prompt to sacrifice and will ask for it in their prayers.

Authentic married love will be held in high esteem, and healthy public opinion will be quick to recognize it, if Christian spouses give outstanding witness to faithfulness and harmony in their love, if they are conspicuous in their concern for the education of their children, and if they play their part in a much needed cultural, psychological, and social renewal in matters of marriage and family. It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role, and its exercise; in this way they will be able to engage in honorable courtship and enter upon marriage of their own.(29)

Holy Orders

The sacrament of holy orders confers the priesthood of Jesus Christ, either fully or in a limited degree, on those who receive it. Bishops alone, as successors of the apostles, have the fullness of Christian priesthood, and to them belongs the office of pastor and teacher over the local church committed to their care. The ministerial priesthood has evolved, historically and theologically, from the episcopacy, and priests are dependent upon the bishops for the exercise of their priestly ministry. The diaconate is the lowest and most limited grade of holy orders, and it may be conferred on those who will ultimately be advanced to the priesthood or on those -- lay deacons -- who intend to remain permanently in the diaconate ministry to assist the priests in preaching, administering the sacraments, and celebrating the liturgy.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent into the world for the redemption of mankind. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached the good news of reconciliation between God and men. Exercising a supreme and unique priesthood by offering himself on Calvary as the victim for sin and thus paying the price of our redemption, he was constituted the "one mediator between God and mankind" (1 Tim. 2:5). Consequently, ***Jesus Christ is also the unique Priest of the New Covenant, and his priesthood will never pass away; it is forever*** (cf. Heb. chaps. 3-11).

The Church that Christ founded on Peter as its rock was from the beginning a hierarchical Church because of the ministry of word and sacrament committed to the apostles. In the words of Tertullian: ***"The Church from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God."*** But the Church is likewise established as a sacrament of salvation that comes to us from God in Christ. Intimately united with Christ as Head, the Church is an organic body that shares in the various functions of Christ as Priest, Prophet, and King. Hence, ***all the people of God constitute a priestly people.***

However, to the apostles was given a ministry that differed specifically from the ministry of the priesthood of the laity, and particularly as regards the prophetic ministry of the word, the priestly ministry of the sacraments, and the kingly or pastoral ministry of government of the churches. To provide for the continuation of these various ministries, the apostles designated certain men to be pastors of the flock.

The ministerial priest is therefore configured to Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the character received at ordination, which is given through the Church and administered by the bishop. The priesthood received is the priesthood of Christ, as is the power that is meant to be used for the service of the people. The priest is therefore a man for others and is ordained for ministry. But the ministry is exercised in dependence on the bishop, although it is always

orientated to the whole Church, to build up the body of Christ and extend his kingdom. It is eminently a spiritual ministry and even when it touches the temporal or secular order, it is always in view of man's sanctification and salvation, as was the ministry of Christ and the apostles.

Like all Christians, bishops and priests are obliged by their baptismal commitment to strive for the perfection of charity and configuration to Christ, but theirs is a special obligation by reason of their priestly ordination and their pastoral ministry. The priest is identified with mission and, as we have seen, he should sanctify himself by the very works of his ministry; but prior to that, in his very person, he has been sealed by the Holy Spirit and configured to Christ as **alter Christus**. Therefore, in speaking of the priest's call to perfection, Vatican Council II states that there is a relationship between the holiness of the priest and the fruitfulness of his ministry and **"God ordinarily prefers to show his wonders through those men who are more submissive to the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit and who, because of their intimate union with Christ and their holiness of life, are able to say with St. Paul: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' "** (Gal. 2:20). (30)

Meritorious Good Works

The second positive means for growth in grace and holiness is meritorious good works that, as the term indicates, comprise all the virtuous acts entitling the individual to an increase of grace and virtue. One normally thinks first of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or of apostolate and ministry as good works, and it is on this basis that many Christians distinguish the active from the contemplative life or love of neighbor from love of God.

However, if these distinctions are pushed too far, one would have to conclude that the only meritorious good works are those that constitute a service to neighbor in the performance of corporal or spiritual works of the apostolate. But this is tantamount to saying that the first precept of charity is love of neighbor and that the contemplative life as such is not meritorious -- conclusions obviously at variance with the teaching of Christ and the principles of spiritual theology.

St. Thomas offers a clear explanation of merit in relation to action and contemplation:

The root of merit is charity. Although charity embraces the love of God and neighbor,... to love God in himself is more meritorious than to love one's neighbor Therefore that which belongs more directly to the love of God is more meritorious on the basis of object than that which belongs to the love of neighbor because of God.

Now the contemplative life has direct and immediate reference to the love of God But the active life is more directly ordained to the love of neighbor Therefore in its nature the contemplative life is of greater merit than the active life

Nevertheless it may happen that a person will merit more in the works of the active life than does another in the activities of the contemplative life; for example, if, out of an abundance of divine love, a person consents to be separated from the sweetness of divine contemplation for a time to fulfill God's will and for his glory.(31)

The terms active life and contemplative life are ambiguous because they may refer to a state of life (such as active religious and contemplative religious); they may mean the type of activity that predominates at a given moment in the life of an individual (e.g., the contemplative exercises of an apostle or the good works of a contemplative); or they may signify in general the works of mercy as compared with one's interior life of prayer and recollection. ***In the spiritual life of the individual Christian, however, both the activity of the interior life (contemplative) and the activity of external works are necessary***; they should complement each other and both should be directed to the glory of God under the impetus of charity. Indeed, ***if properly balanced, the works of the active life are conducive to the contemplative activity of prayer and recollection; conversely, the interior life should be the source of apostolic activity***, at the risk of reducing the apostolate to humanistic philanthropy or social work.

Good Works

When we speak of meritorious good works as a means of growth in grace and holiness, we are referring primarily and essentially not to the external acts of apostolate and ministry, but to the virtues from which those external works proceed.

The reason for this is that the external works are *good* in the measure that they are directed to a morally good object or end; external works are *meritorious* in the measure that they proceed from charity, which constitutes the supernatural motivation for the work. Now, it is evident that a person can perform the external work without possessing the supernatural virtue corresponding to that work (as in the case of a person in the state of mortal sin), or a person may perform the action without the necessary interior dispositions (cf. Matt. 6:1). In neither case is the external good work productive of an increase in grace. Therefore ***it is necessary to insist that external good works should proceed from the proper interior dispositions and that growth in holiness through meritorious good works applies first and foremost to the operation of the infused virtues***.

As morally good operative habits, the virtues are ordained to action, but ***the formal and distinctive element of virtue is that it is a habit***, an interior quality or disposition by which the human faculties are perfected in their operations. ***Every human faculty has a purpose or goal that is the reason for its existence and when an individual by deliberate control acts in view of that purpose, he or she contributes to completeness and perfection as a person***.

Therefore Aristotle described virtue as a habit that makes its possessor good, and what he does good. When it is a question of the infused supernatural virtues, it is necessary to recall the definition given by ***St. Augustine, who described virtue as "a good quality of mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us without us."***

The pagan philosophers understood and taught that the integration and fulfillment of the human person are impossible without the virtues, without subordinating man's lower powers and faculties to the control of reason. But because we know through revelation by God that we are made in the image of God and called to intimate union with the Trinity in glory, ***we, as people of faith, realize that our true vocation is to become mature persons in Christ, for which we need God's grace and the infused virtues***.

These virtues, working as they do through our natural faculties, are meant to become ever more deeply radicated in the human person until they reach that perfection at which the Holy Spirit becomes the primary agent of activity through his gifts. **After the sacraments, there is no more efficacious means for growth in grace and holiness than the acts of virtue imperated by charity**, whether they be the works of mercy, of apostolate and ministry, or the less visible but equally sanctifying acts of humility, meekness, patience, obedience, and penance.

Merit

The concept of merit has its source in the teaching of Christ (cf. Matt. 6:1-4; 20:1-16; 25:14-23), and St. Paul speaks of merit in terms of wages received for one's toil (1 Cor. 3:8) and as a recompense (1 Cor. 3:14). **It is necessary, of course, to avoid any juridical or mathematical interpretation of merit**, as if the spiritual goods merited from God were due in strict justice. Scripture also states that of ourselves we can do nothing; **God alone gives the increase**. Nevertheless, we use the term *merit*, but always with the understanding that since grace and charity are the basis of merit, in rewarding us for our works of grace God is rewarding his own gifts to us. **We need grace to merit grace, but grace comes only from God**.

Our actions, therefore, are meritorious in the measure that they proceed from grace and are motivated by charity. It does not matter so much for merit what kind of good act is performed as the love with which we perform the act. A very insignificant action done out of intense love will be much more meritorious than a great deed performed with less charity or less perfect motivation. **As St. Teresa says: "The Lord does not look so much at the magnitude of anything we do as at the love with which we do it."**(32)

Since merit is determined by the actuation of the virtue of charity, an actual increase of grace requires a more intense act of charity than the habit of charity possessed here and now. Thus, St. Thomas states: "Charity does not actually increase by any act of charity whatever. But any act of charity disposes for an increase of charity, so far as by an act of charity a man becomes more prompt to continue working through charity, and as this disposition increases, the man breaks forth in a more fervent act of charity through which he strives to grow in charity, and then charity is actually increased."[\(33\)](#) Of course, any act of charity presupposes an actual grace reducing the habit from potentiality to action, and this applies also to the more intense act of charity. Hence the importance of striving to dispose oneself for ever more intense acts of charity, without which there is always the danger of falling into spiritual lukewarmness and purely routine works of virtue that make the soul susceptible to all kinds of temptation. We should note, however, that the sacraments, which work *ex opere operato*, always produce grace so long as the soul receives them with the proper dispositions.

According to the theological axiom that the principle of merit does not fall under merit -- or stated positively, we need grace to merit grace -- no person can merit the first grace for himself, and therefore a person in mortal sin can do nothing for himself by way of merit. However, since grace does serve as the basis for merit, those souls who are in the state of grace may, by their prayers and good works, and by reason of a certain fittingness because they are friends of God, merit the first grace for a person in sin. Indeed, prayer for the conversion of sinners is one of the most powerful means of obtaining whatever is necessary for the salvation of souls.

Prayer of Petition

St. Thomas assigns four distinct values to prayer: satisfactory, meritorious, a certain spiritual delight, and impetratory. (request or entreaty)

The **satisfactory** value of prayer is evident. It is clear not only from the fact that it always presupposes an act of humility and subjection to God, whom we have offended by our sins, but also because prayer springs from charity, the source of all satisfaction for sin. Finally, a prayer well made is a difficult task for imperfect souls, by reason of the attention and firmness of will that it requires; hence it is also satisfactory as regards the difficulty involved.

Like any other act of supernatural virtue, **prayer receives its meritorious value from charity**, from which it springs by means of the virtue of religion, of which it is a proper act. As a meritorious act, prayer is subjected to the conditions for any other virtuous act and is ruled by the same laws. In this sense prayer can merit **de condigno** whatever can be merited in this way so long as the proper conditions are fulfilled.

The third effect of prayer is a certain **spiritual delight** of the soul. But in order that prayer actually produce spiritual delight, attention is absolutely necessary; spiritual delight is incompatible with distractions, voluntary or involuntary. For that reason, contemplative prayer, in which the attention of the soul is the greatest possible by reason of the concentration of all one's psychological energies on the object contemplated, carries with it the greatest delight. **Prayer nourishes our intellect, arouses our sensibility in a holy manner, and stimulates and strengthens our will. It is truly a refectio mentis, which by its very nature is meant to fill the soul with sweetness.**

But it is the impetratory value of prayer that interests us most as an element of increase and development of the Christian life independent of merit. Let us first see the principal differences between the meritorious and impetratory aspects of prayer. As a meritorious act, prayer implies a relation to justice in regard to a reward; its impetratory value implies a relation simply to the mercy of God. **As meritorious, it has an intrinsic efficacy for obtaining a reward; as impetratory, its efficacy rests solely on the promise of God. The meritorious efficacy is based above all on charity; the impetratory value is based primarily on faith.** The object of merit and of impetration is not always the same, although sometimes these two aspects may coincide. Most important for our purposes, however, is the fact that prayer of petition, when it fills the requirements, infallibly obtains what is asked in virtue of the promises of God. The truth is definitely **de fide**, based as it is on several scriptural texts:

Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. The one who knocks enters (Matt. 7:7-8). You will receive all that you pray for, provided you have faith (Matt. 21:22).

And whatever you ask in my name I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son. Anything you ask in my name, I will do (John 14:13-14).

If you live in me, and my words stay part of you, you may ask what you will -- it will be done for you (John 15:7).

I give you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23-24).

We have this confidence in God: that he hears us whenever we ask for anything according to his will. And since we know that he hears us whenever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours (1 John 5:14-15).

It is impossible to speak more clearly or with more insistence. The divine promise regarding an answer to prayer stands out in full certainty in the sources of revelation. But what conditions are required that prayer infallibly obtain and fulfill the divine promises? ***St. Thomas assigns four of them,*** to which all the others that are listed by other authors can be reduced: that ***one should pray for oneself; that one should pray for that which is necessary for salvation; that one should pray piously; and that one should pray with perseverance.*** (34)

The reason that one must pray *for oneself* is that ***the granting of a divine grace always demands a subject who is properly disposed,*** and it may be that one's neighbor is not disposed to receive that which is asked in prayer. On the other hand, those who pray for themselves, if they do it fittingly, are by that very fact disposed to, be heard. If -it were otherwise, their prayers would not be true prayers at all.

This is not to say, however, that prayer for others is always inefficacious. On the contrary, it often obtains what is asked; but we cannot have infallible certainty of an answer because we cannot be certain of the dispositions of the person for whom we pray. We may ask God that he dispose our neighbor for a certain effect through his infinite mercy, but God has not promised this to anyone, and therefore we cannot obtain it infallibly.

One must pray for those things necessary for salvation. This means anything at all that in any way is necessary or useful for salvation. As such it falls under ***the infallible impetration of prayer.*** Hence we can impetrate by prayer the growth or increase of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and even those things that cannot in any way be merited. It is evident from this that the area of impetration is much wider than that of merit. Thus by impetration one can petition actual efficacious grace in order not to fall into a grave sin or to perform some salutary act or even the gift of final perseverance that is infallibly connected with eternal salvation. ***The Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, frequently begs in the liturgy for these graces no one can merit in the strict sense of the word.***

One must pray piously, and by this word St. Thomas refers to all the conditions required on the part of the individual who prays -- ***humility, confidence, attention, and petition in the name of Christ.*** Some authors include all these subjective conditions under the heading of the state of grace, without which, they say, no one can pray piously. St. Thomas raises this very objection, and this is his solution:

The sinner cannot pray piously in the sense that his prayer is informed by the supernatural habit of the virtue of piety, which he lacks, but he can pray piously in the sense that he can ask for something that pertains to piety, just as he who does not have the habit of justice may nevertheless desire something that is just. And although the prayer of the sinner is not meritorious, it can nevertheless have an impetratory value, because merit is based on justice, while impetration is based on pure gratuity or liberality.(35)

Consequently, ***although the state of grace is undoubtedly most fitting for the efficacy of prayer, it is not absolutely necessary.*** It is one thing to demand a wage that is due in justice, but it is something quite distinct to beg for alms. In the second case, no other titles are necessary but one's need. What is always necessary, however, is the previous impulse of an actual grace, which can be given and actually is given to sinners.

The prayer must be made with perseverance. The Lord repeated time and again the necessity of perseverance in prayer until we obtain what we ask. Recall the parable of the friend who came to beg for bread (Luke 11:5-13), of the evil judge and the importunate widow (Luke 18:1-5), the moving episode of the woman of Cana who insisted in spite of an apparent rebuff (Matt. 15:21-28), and the sublime example of Christ himself, who frequently spent the whole night in prayer and in Gethsemane prayed in great anguish to his heavenly Father (Luke 6:12; 22:44). .

Such are the conditions for the infallible efficacy of prayer. In practice, however, we obtain many things from God without fulfilling all these conditions because of the superabundance of the divine mercy. But if we do fulfill all the conditions, we shall infallibly obtain, by reason of the divine promise, even those graces we could not merit in an absolute sense.

Utility and Necessity of Prayer

Following the teaching of St. Thomas, the first question to be asked concerning prayer of petition concerns its fittingness and utility. ***God knows our needs better than we do; therefore, it seems unnecessary to give voice to our petitions. Moreover, God knows from the beginning what he will grant us and what he will not grant us; therefore, since we cannot change the immutable will of God, it is useless to pray.***

In answer to these difficulties, St. Thomas replies, first, that we need to pray to God, not to make known to him our needs, but that we may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to God; secondly, that our motive in praying is not to change the divine will in our regard but, by our prayers, to obtain what God has decreed.(36) Scripture explicitly commands us to pray always (Luke 18:1); the theological reason is that divine providence decrees what effects are to take place, by what causes, and in what order. Human actions, and among them prayer, are causes of certain effects under God's dispensation, and hence when we achieve something by our prayers, we are receiving what God has decreed we shall receive through our prayers.

The prayer of petition is not, therefore, an extrinsic cause that moves or determines the will of God, for this is impossible. It is a cause only in the sense that God has related some things to others in such a way that, if certain causes are placed, certain effects will, follow. Moreover, prayer is a conditional cause, as if God were to decree: "If you ask for such and such a benefit, it

will be granted you; but if you do not ask, you will not receive it." It follows from this that it is an error to believe that if we persevere in prayer, come what may, we shall always obtain that which we seek. ***Some things will be granted to us whether we pray for them or not***, because God has decreed that they shall be granted to us absolutely; ***some things will never be granted to us, no matter how earnestly and how long we pray for them; still others will be granted to us only if we pray, because God has decreed that they will be given only on the condition that we ask for them.***

The next question concerns the things for which we should pray. Although the very notion of petition signifies that we desire something for ourselves, our petitions to God should always be made with the condition that what we ask is according to his will. And there are certain things that by their very nature are in accordance with, or contrary to, the divine will. Thus we can, in an absolute sense, petition God for any of those things that pertain to God's glory, eternal salvation, and growth in grace and virtue, for then we conform our wills to God's will. But it would never be lawful to ask God for anything that would work to our spiritual detriment, for this would be asking God to go against his own divine will.

But what of temporal goods? Is it commendable and lawful to ask God for such things as the necessities of life, good health, a long life? ***The principle used by St. Augustine was that it is lawful to pray for anything that it is lawful to desire.***

Our need for temporal goods is based on the natural law of selfpreservation, our rights and duties as members of society, and the requirements of our particular profession, occupation, or vocation. ***All things being equal, it matters not whether we possess many worldly goods or only the minimum; what matters is the manner in which we use them and the degree of our attachment to them.***

Therefore, so long as we use temporal goods virtuously and subordinate them to our true ultimate end, it is lawful to possess them and to petition for them from God. But since some persons are excessively attached to temporal goods or are led into occasions of sin through the possession of them, one can readily surmise why prayers for such things often go unanswered. We do not know what things are for our good, and for that reason we should always pray for temporal goods under the condition that such things be in accordance with God's will and for our own spiritual benefit.

If used in the proper way, the prayer of petition is of great spiritual benefit. It is in itself an excellent act of the virtue of religion, it exercises us in the virtue of humility, and it increases our confidence in God. When we pray, we enter into the workings of divine providence by placing the secondary conditional cause from which certain effects will follow, according to the divine decrees. Lastly, ***when we are on our knees before God, we are thereby raised to a greater dignity, for the proper use of prayer will conform our will to God's.***

But prayer is not only fitting and useful; it is also absolutely necessary in the economy of divine providence, both by necessity of precept and by necessity of means ***ex institutione divina***. As to the first, Scripture repeatedly commands that we pray: "Watch and pray" (Matt. 26:41); "They ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1); "Ask, and it will be given you" (Matt. 7:7);

"Pray constantly" (1 Thess. 5:17); "Continue steadfastly in prayer" (Col. 4:2). Even natural precept obliges us to pray because we are so weak and lack many things only God can supply. The ecclesiastical law prescribes certain prayers on certain occasions, such as during the administration of the sacraments, during times of great peril, the canonical recitation of the Office. If we fulfill our religious obligations by attendance at Mass on days of obligation and say some prayers daily, we can be at ease in our conscience as regards the obligation to pray.

As regards the necessity of means, it is common and certain theological doctrine that prayer is necessary by necessity of means for the salvation of adults. There are many testimonies from the Fathers to substantiate this doctrine, but perhaps the most conclusive is that of ***St. Augustine, which was quoted by the Council of Trent: "For God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes you both to do what you can do and to pray for what you cannot do, and assists you that you may be able."(37) God will not refuse grace to him who prays for it with the proper dispositions, for it is the divine will that all men be saved. For this reason spiritual writers have listed the faithful practice of prayer as a sign of predestination and the lack of prayer as a sign of reprobation.***

Since prayer is an act of the virtue of religion, which has the worship of God as its proper object, it would seem unnecessary to ask whether it is lawful to pray to anyone but God. But the practice of the Church and the objections of certain religious groups make it necessary to clarify the practice of praying to the saints. St. Thomas gives the answer as clearly and succinctly as one could wish:

Prayer is offered to a person in two ways: first, to be fulfilled by him, and secondly, to be obtained through him. In the first way we offer prayer to God alone, since all our prayers ought to be directed to the acquisition of grace and glory, which God alone gives, according to Psalm 83:12: Grace and glory he [the Lord] bestows." But in the second way we pray to the saints, whether angels or men, not that God may know our petitions through them, but ***that our prayers may be effective through their prayers and merits.***(38)

The Council of Trent solemnly defended the practice of praying to the saints to intercede for us, and of venerating their relics and images.(39) The principal theological reasons for the practice are the goodness of God, who deigns to associate the saints in the obtaining and distribution of graces; the doctrine of the communion of saints; and the perfect charity and abundant merits of the blessed, who know our needs and desire to assist us to attain glory.

What is to be said of the practice of praying to the souls in purgatory and the possibility of their interceding for us? The Church has made no definite statement on this matter, and therefore it is an open question among theologians. ***Many theologians, however, defend the practice of praying to the souls in purgatory.*** Their primary argument is based on the doctrine of the communion of saints, for it is unlikely that those who are in purgatory and assured of ultimate glory would be entirely ignorant of the needs of souls on earth, especially of those they have loved in this life. Also, although we cannot know for certain the amount of suffrage and relief that is granted the souls in purgatory by our prayers and good works, it is probable that the souls realize that their relief is due to someone here on earth, and they would logically be moved to gratitude toward their benefactors.

Difficulties in Prayer

There are two main sources of difficulty in the practice, of prayer: distractions and dryness.

These difficulties are not restricted to the prayer of petition nor to any particular type of prayer. Consequently, what is said here should be applied to all of the grades of prayer we shall discuss later.

Since prayer is an operation of the practical intellect under the impetus of the will, by its very nature it requires attention, as does any other intellectual operation. But there are various degrees of attention, and not every type of prayer requires the same degree of attention. Indeed, in the higher grades of prayer it would seem that the individual pays no attention at all to the act of prayer as such. With beginners in the practice of prayer, on the other hand, there may be a great deal of attention, but the prayer is as yet very imperfect.

In order to understand this apparent paradox it is necessary to consider the kinds of attention that can be used in prayer and the psychology of habit formation. Since prayer is conversation with God, it involves the use of words, whether one reads or speaks or merely thinks them. ***In the act of praying, one may focus attention on any one of three elements: the words themselves*** (e.g., to pronounce them correctly or use them rightly), ***the meaning of the words and content of the prayer as a whole***, or the ***one to whom the prayer is addressed and the purpose of the prayer***. In vocal prayer it is essential that one be attentive to the words spoken; in meditation one must give attention to the meaning of the words; but in any kind of prayer the most important element is to fix the mind on God by the third kind of attention.

Like any other human activity, the practice of prayer can become habitual, and therefore it falls under the laws of habit formation. Habits are acquired by the repetition of acts, and as a habit becomes more deeply rooted and perfected, the acts that flow from it are more facile, more pleasant, and require less actual attention. For that reason habits are said to be "second nature."

In the practice of prayer beginners will have to give attention to all the details and mechanics of prayer so that they will learn to do things correctly from the start. ***Thus the beginners in meditation will follow some method. But as they become more facile in the practice of prayer, the focal point of attention changes from words and methods and other mechanical details to the content of the prayer and the purpose of the prayer.*** Attention is still present -- as indeed it must be for all prayer -- but it is a different and more excellent type of attention. At this stage one recites the rosary with practically no awareness of the words or their meaning but with attention to a given mystery, or one's attention in mental prayer has shifted from methods and devices to the content and purpose of the meditation. At this point the soul is liberated, so to speak, so that it can soar to the higher grades of prayer in which the mind is fixed on God so strongly that it forgets all other things.

But however much we endeavor to keep our attention fixed on one thing, we cannot do so for an extended period of time. Even in the act of concentration the human mind wavers, if only for a second. Fixed attention becomes all the more difficult as the object of concentration is loftier, or the time spent in concentration is longer. There is, of course, a great discrepancy in the powers

of concentration and attention of various individuals, due to temperament and training, but the human mind is also limited by the inherent weaknesses of man's psychosomatic structure.

Our concern with **distractions** in prayer is not from the viewpoint of their effect on the merit of prayer, but their effect on the practice of prayer as such. Whether voluntary or involuntary, a distraction consists in any alien thought or imagination that prevents the mind from attending to that which it is doing. If the distraction affects the external senses or internal senses only, the mind can still give attention to what it is doing, but with difficulty. If the distraction consists in an alien thought in the mind itself, attention is completely destroyed or, rather, it is shifted to another object. Divided attention or the complete lack of attention in the performance of actions that involve manual operations or bodily movements (e.g., walking, dancing, eating) does not necessarily affect the perfection of the operation, but when it is a question of the operation of the higher faculties, some degree of attention is absolutely necessary. Distractions in prayer, therefore, will always render it less perfect or will nullify it completely.

We have stated that **distractions in prayer may be voluntary or involuntary**. In either case they are obstacles to prayer, and they must be reduced and ultimately eliminated if one is to make progress in this spiritual exercise. To achieve this **it is necessary to examine the causes from which distractions spring**:

1. **Constitutional factors**: nervous or sanguine temperament; vivid and unstable imagination; weak powers of concentration; vehement and uncontrolled passions; sensate nature.
2. **Physical or mental illness**: brain disorders; glandular malfunction; physical exhaustion; mental fatigue; neurotic traits; psychotic predispositions.
3. **Character defects**: any acquired habits inimical to the practice of prayer (lack of recollection; dissipation; lukewarmness; vain curiosity; slothfulness; lust; gluttony; pride).
4. **Improper spiritual direction**: if the spiritual director imposes his own preconceived ideas upon the individual without understanding the needs of the soul, the capacity of the soul, and the movements of grace in the soul (e.g., to force a soul to practice meditation when God moves the soul to a higher degree of prayer).
5. **The devil**: with God's permission the devil sometimes acts directly on the external and internal senses, or indirectly distracts from prayer by working through any of the other causes enumerated.
6. **Unsuitable circumstances**: uncomfortable posture; improper time; external noises; lack of proximate preparation; excessive heat or cold.

There is no infallible method for ridding oneself of all distractions in prayer because, as we have seen, it is the nature of the human mind to waver in its attention. Nevertheless, this does not excuse us from doing the best we can to pray with full attention and to forestall possible distractions to the best of our ability. To this end, one should approach prayer with a recollected

spirit, putting aside all concerns and interests and entering into prayer with the simple and pure motive of addressing God.

In particular, ***one should prevent external distractions by selecting the proper time and place and a reasonably comfortable posture for prayer.*** When this is not possible, one should make every effort to withdraw oneself mentally from one's surroundings and to ***enter into the cell of the heart to speak with God.*** Even more important, one should rid oneself of internal sources of distraction by putting aside all thoughts of one's duties, anxieties, interests, except so far as they may be the subject matter of one's prayer. ***It is necessary to give full attention to the duty of the moment,*** which in this instance is the practice of prayer. As a remote preparation for prayer the following points are of special importance: ***a spirit of silence and recollection, avoidance of vain curiosity, custody of the senses, spiritual reading practiced faithfully, and the practice of mortification.***

Aridity or dryness in the practice of prayer consists in a certain inability to produce the necessary intellectual and affective acts, or in an actual distaste for prayer. It is usually encountered in the practice of mental prayer, and it reaches its most painful state in the higher stages of mystical prayer when it seems that God has abandoned the soul completely.

Dryness in prayer may be caused by the individual, by God, or by the devil, but those who actually experience dryness should first suspect that they themselves are the cause. ***Among the internal and involuntary causes of dryness are bad health, bodily fatigue, excessive activity or absorbing duties, vehement and prolonged temptations that exhaust one's powers, improper training in the practice of prayer, methods of prayer unsuited to the individual.*** Sometimes, however, dryness is the natural result of one's own imperfections: lukewarmness in the service of God, infidelity to grace, habitual venial sin, habits of sensuality, vain curiosity, instability and superficiality, excessive activism.

At other times ***dryness may be sent by God as a purification or a test.*** After a soul has become somewhat adept in the practice of prayer, God usually deliberately withdraws all sensible consolation so that the soul will be purified of any excessive attachment to such consolation, will be humbled at seeing how little it can do without God's help, and will thus be disposed for the next grade of prayer. ***Throughout one's advancement in the life of prayer, this alternation between dryness and consolation is usually perceptible at regular intervals, and especially when God is preparing the soul for some new advance or some greater grace.*** If the dryness is prolonged over a long period, in spite of the soul's fidelity to grace and earnest efforts, one may suspect that the soul is entering upon the night of the senses or some other passive purification.

If, however, there is every indication that the dryness is caused by the devil, the soul should strive to be faithful in the practice of prayer, even if this means that it must return from a higher grade of prayer to the simple recitation of vocal prayers. The important thing is for the soul to do the best it can and under no pretext give up the practice of prayer, for that is precisely the goal the devil seeks to achieve.

But since one should always suspect that dryness in prayer is due to one's own weakness and imperfection, the best remedy is to correct any defects in the practice of prayer, especially

lukewarmness and negligence in the service of God. If the causes of the dryness are beyond one's control, the best thing to do is to resign oneself to the trial for as long a time as God wills, to realize that sensible devotion and consolation are not essential to the true love of God, to humble oneself with a sense of one's unworthiness, and to persevere in prayer at any cost. The periods of involuntary dryness can be periods of great merit and purification, especially if one unites oneself with the suffering Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Other pitfalls to be avoided in the practice are the following:

1. **Purely mechanical recitation of vocal prayers and lifeless routine** in the practice of mental prayer.
2. **Excessive personal effort**, as if one were able to do all by sheer force; or **undue passivity and inertia**, as if one should leave all to God alone.
3. **Discouragement** at not perceiving the consolations one expected; or rash optimism that one is further advanced in prayer than one really is.
4. **Attachment to sensible consolation**, which causes in the soul a certain spiritual gluttony that impels one to seek the consolations of God rather than the God of consolations.
5. **Persistence in the use of a particular method**, as if that were the only possible method, or the **premature abandonment of a method**.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 24, a. 9.
2. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 59.
3. Cf. Denz.-Schön., *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), n. 1608.
4. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, n. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, n. 6.
6. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 9.
7. Cf. *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 69, a. 8.
8. *Ibid.*, q. 65, a. 1.
9. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, n. 39.
10. *Apostolic Constitution Divinae Consortium Naturae*, AAS, LXIII (1971), pp. 657-64.
11. Denz.-Schön. 1609, 1628.
12. *Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People*, n. 2.
13. *Ibid.*, nn. 6-7.
14. Cf. *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 2.
15. Cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, n. 10.
16. *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, n. 2.

17. Denz.-Schön. 1739-1743, and Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*.
18. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, AAS LIX (1967), pp. 539-73.
19. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, nn. 1-11, *passim*.
20. *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery), section H. In the Instruction *Immensae Caritatis*, issued on January 25, 1973, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship stated that the occasions on which the faithful are permitted to receive Communion more than once in the same day are restricted and clearly stated. The basic norm that Communion may be received only once a day remains in force, and it is not permitted to set it aside merely from motives of devotion.
21. In the baptism of infants the sponsors supply the intention by speaking for the infant; in Viaticum or the anointing of an unconscious person a habitual intention suffices.
22. Cf. Denz.-Schön. 1648-50.
23. Council of Trent, Session 14, Chap. 3. The Council described contrition as sorrow for sin, accompanied by the resolve to sin no more (Chap. 4). Cf. Denz.-Schön. 1703.
24. *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 85, a. 3.
25. St. Thomas says: "It may happen that the strength of the penitent's act at times corresponds to a greater degree of, grace than that from which he fell by sin; at times to an equal degree; at times to a lower degree. Consequently the penitent sometimes rises in a higher degree than he previously possessed; sometimes in equal degree; sometimes in lesser degree. The same reasoning applies to the [infused] virtues, since they follow upon grace" (*Summa*, III, q. 89, a. 2).
26. Cf. Denz.-Schön. 1679-83.
27. *Anointing of the Sick*, November 30, 1972. The passage from Mark, mentioned in the quotation from the Council of Trent reads: "They expelled many demons, anointed the sick with oil, and worked many cures" (Denz.-Schön. 1695).
28. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 73.
29. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, nn. 47-49.
30. *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 12.
31. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 182, a. 2.
32. *The Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1946), Seventh Mansions, Chap. 4.
33. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 24, a. 6.
34. *Ibid.*, q. 83, a. 15, ad 2.
35. *Ibid.*, a. 16, ad 2.
36. *Ibid.*, a. 2.
37. Cf. St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, Chap. 43, n. 50; Denz.-Schön. 1536.
38. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 83, a. 4.
39. Denz.-Schön. 1744, 1755, 1821.