

J. M. J.

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OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

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REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Among the many deaths of which we have learned of late, none has affected us more sensibly than that of our venerated friend, the Rev. F. Ramière, S. J., the pious founder of the Apostleship of Prayer—an Association we were the first to introduce, at his request, in this country, as the first volumes of *The "Ave Maria"* clearly and amply show. Ever since we have naturally taken an especial interest in the wonderful progress and propagation of this glorious Apostleship of Prayer. Were it a human work, we might apprehend for it something of a death blow in the regrettable and almost sudden demise of its saintly founder; but, as he said himself, on the eve of his death, the Apostleship of Prayer was not his work, but rather the work of the Heart of Jesus; and, therefore, far from anticipating that his removal would paralyse its progress, he confidently announced that it would soon afterwards assume the development God intended when he started it.

The Apostleship of Prayer! we still remember the delight with which we introduced it in the pages of the Messenger of Mary to our pious and fervent readers; and our unbounded admiration of the Divine work has never subsided a moment since it was brought to our attention. Indeed, we were blessed in this act of charity: we read first and then published our translation; and if anything has convinced us of the necessity of prayer in our own work here, and shown us the beauties of a real spirit of prayer, it is the publication of that marvellous Apostleship. What a privilege to be thus invested with the sovereign power of prayer!

Year after year our faith in prayer has increased; and after a personal and close observation of men and things for more than forty-six years, we feel and realize that God has blessed among ourselves nothing but what has *been made by prayer His own work*. What a lesson for us all on the eve of the holy season of Lent, which is eminently the season of prayer! Only a few days ago, we met at the foot of the Altar to commemorate the Orison or Prayer of our Lord. A whole day was thus given us to attentively behold and contemplate our Divine Model and Master, in the Garden of Gethsemani, prostrate upon the ground, and praying for each one of us. It was on the eve of His Passion. "His Disciples also followed Him, and when He came to the place He said to them: *Pray, lest ye enter into temptation*, and He was withdrawn away from them a stone's-cast, and kneeling down, He prayed, saying: *Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done*. And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed the longer; and His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground, and when He rose up from prayer and was come to His Disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and He said to them: *Why sleep you? arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation*."

From the moment our Blessed Lord came down to the Immaculate bosom of His Virgin Mother, to His last human breath on the Cross; His whole life upon earth was, above all, an incessant prayer; not alone for His devoted Disciples, but even for His cruel murderers—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. Not satisfied to teach us by words and examples the importance of prayer, He has left us a formula—the Lord's Prayer—with a special injunction to repeat it after Him and with Him, and the following solemn promise: *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name, ask and you shall receive; that your joy may be full*. Here you have plainly revealed the cause of the boundless and unspeakable joy of saintly souls whose loving prayers are the admiration of the angels in heaven, while they are a piercing reproach and a plain condemnation of all who neglect to pray. Do they bring you praise or censure?

[OVER.]

Let us now reveal to you a secret which to many will scarcely sound as a revelation, namely, that since our arrival here, all the success we have obtained are due to *prayer*. Not a few were already well aware of it; but we want all to know it, as an undeniable matter of fact. To this declaration we shall add another, viz.: that whoever among our beloved Religious wishes to see a House of the Community or an office or an obedience, an employment, an undertaking blessed, *prayer* will be the first, the indispensable means to secure success. We believe in no other, nor do we pray for any such result *as success* among us without prayer. Our convictions on this important subject may be stronger to-day than ever before, fortified as they are by a long and close observation of men and things, as stated above. But they are not by any means new. As a proof of it we might refer to what we published, in the first years of *The "Ave Maria."* Among many other lines written on the same beautiful subject we may quote the following (Vol. II, p. 94, 1868):

"Is it not, then, something monstrous to find men who do not pray?"

A man who does not pray is an unfaithful priest, who refuses to God a worship which he ought to pay Him, not only in his own name, but also in the name of all sentient and material beings, which are incapable of offering to God an intelligent prayer, full of love.

The Arabs of Algeria, at sight of the French unbelievers, used to say: "They are detestable men; they are injurious, because they do not pray."

And, in truth, a man who does not pray is a man deprived of all the good which can be obtained only by prayer; he is weak and infirm, the miserable dupe of all errors, the unhappy victim—the vile slave of all passions; and therefore he is a man without faith and without morals, capable of committing every crime and every excess. Prayer is not only a want: it is a comfort. If God had not commanded us to pray, we should ask of Him a favor, the grace of praying to Him. Prayer is the fusion of the heart of man into the Heart of God; it is the consolation of exile, the delight of hope, the sigh of love, the beginning of celestial conversation, the token of eternal bliss.

Happy is he who understands this important doctrine! happy he who makes prayer his study and his delight! A man who prays, is a man who will be saved; a man who prays not, is a man that will be lost. True science, true philosophy consists in knowing how to pray. To pray well is to live well, and to live well is to be happy both in time and eternity.

You who read these hurried lines, pray for yourselves and pray also for him who has written them."

As we grow in age, we grow in love for prayer. Hence our lively sense of gratitude towards those loving hearts whose daily prayers have been recently poured forth, not only for general but even personal blessings—as the speedy recovery of our dear Rev. Father Granger and ourself from our late accidents prove. Oh! let us pray more than ever, and spread around us, by example and teaching, by constant and increasing efforts, the wholesome, the saving spirit of prayer. Who, do you suppose, are the most valuable members in our little Religious Family? Undoubtedly those who pray best. "Then," each one may say, "why not I?" Many others, in the eyes of the world, may stand more precious; but before the Supreme Judge, prayer may bring me to the front. Is this a dream? Prayer may most certainly make it a reality—oh! God of mercy! I desire nothing else. Hitherto, I see, I have lived a burden to others; but henceforth *I will pray*. Bless my office; bless my every act and every step; direct my heart upwards. May the future repair the past! To my last breath may my soul ever aspire after Thee! I will pray, indeed, for our dear Congregation.

Our great consolation here, is the Perpetual Adoration on our premises, and the Perpetual Daily Mass for our own Religious and benefactors. Upon these two wide-spreading wings, may we not, each and all, daily rise above the dense and thick fogs of this dreary land of exile? When we die, this double insurance against forgetfulness will prove to be a rich investment, a precious solace, aye a source of joy for our last hours, but especially for those whose life was moulded after the Divine precept, "always to pray and never to faint."

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior General.