

WHERE TO GET HELP.....

by

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How many times in life do you feel the problems piling up, solutions hard to find, and you wonder: now where am I going to get help?

The biggest help, of course, comes from God, Whose care follows you wherever you go and whatever you do. And the best way to get a healthy share of His help is by prayer and the Sacraments.

People have a lot of funny ideas about prayer. You don't have to be on your knees to pray, nor do you need a gilt-edged prayerbook. Real prayer is simply talking with God, Who has a personal interest in each one of you and is only too glad to listen to you and to help you whenever you speak up and ask for help.

It's a wonderful idea to start off the day with a prayer - not necessarily a long string, but just a few words like - "Thanks for bringing me through the night, Lord. I'd like to live this new day with You, doing everything Your way, with You and for You. Please stay with me all day long and help me. Don't let me do anything You can't do with me." There's a nifty prayer in four sentences. If you say it on your knees, you'll probably remind a few others to say good morning to God. I heard just the other day about a boy who came into the Church, because the first night he spent in a Catholic school, he saw the other lads kneeling down beside their beds to say their prayers before turning in. He thought

only little boys did this, and it made a great impression on him.

You should say hello to God during the day, too. It doesn't matter where you are or what you are doing. You can speak to God while getting on a bus, sitting at the typewriter, or waiting for an elevator. The great truth is that we can contact God at any time with a short glance or thought or word in His direction. This habit of prayer can fill your day with strength, for in looking to God from time to time as the day goes by, you will especially learn to look to Him in time of trial and temptation and trouble.

Once you realize that Christ really lives within you, and you try sincerely to live your life with Him, doing everything as He wants to do it with you, then you turn your whole life into a prayer. Like King Midas in the fable, you turn everything you touch into gold - only, your gold is eternal. This continual contact with God through prayer gives real depth and richness to your life, that can otherwise be drab and empty and rather purposeless. Sometimes people wonder what to speak to God about. The simplest answer to that one is to speak to Him about Himself and yourself. Certainly if you know who God is, it won't seem so surprising that you should adore Him and tell Him that you love Him. And if you begin to realize all He has done for you, you won't find it so strange that you should say thanks once in a while. And if you're like every human being who has made some mistakes, it will be the most natural thing in the world

to tell Him you are sorry and ask Him for the strength to do better in the future. And then there are those hundred and one things we need every day. That brings us to the easiest type of prayer, the kind in which we ask God for all the things we need.

One of the great things you can thank God for, as a Catholic, is the fact that you have the Sacraments at your disposal. If you got down on your knees and stayed there for the next hundred years or so, you couldn't begin to thank God for the great grace He has afforded you, in giving you Confession, Mass and Holy Communion so that you could partake of His strength and face life with Him.

Always remember that these Sacraments are yours to use. They are not given as a reward for virtue, but as a means of helping you to be good.

Some girls seem to make a torture of Confession. God never meant it to be that. He really instituted the Sacrament of Confession to help you stay close to Him. All He wants is that you frankly admit your faults, humbly and sincerely as you see them. The priest is there to help with any difficulties and clear up any doubts. And, of course, the most important thing of all is to be really sorry for your past sins, when you confess them, and to be determined to start off anew with Christ Our Lord, and to do better with the help of His grace. With the absolution that comes from Confession, you get the grace and the strength and the power of Christ to do better. Confession isn't just a means of white-

washing your sins. It's more like a blood transfusion, giving you new strength and vigor to keep on trying, not to get discouraged, because Christ Our Lord walks out of the box with you. If you sincerely do your best, facing life with Him, you can't lose.

Of course, all of this doesn't make it easier to kneel down and admit that you made mistakes. God doesn't ask that it be easy for you, but only that you have the candor and sincerity to admit that you have made mistakes, and then to ask for help that you need to do better. Confession can bring you all these things, and will also bring you the deep peace of soul that comes with knowing you stand right with God. That in itself is a great blessing.

Mass and Holy Communion are great sources of strength, too. Some girls start slipping on Sunday Mass when they are away from home. But you have all the more reason to be faithful now that your needs are greater. Remember, God thinks of you and cares for you every moment of every day. The half hour you give back to Him on Sundays isn't much compared to that. Even though it will mean missing some sleep when you're tired after a Saturday night dance, be faithful, and God will be faithful to you when you need some extra help some day.

If you appreciate what the Mass is, you'll be at Mass whenever it's humanly possible to be there, even through the week. Don't just sit and watch the Mass either. Offer it up with the priest. Bring your personal offerings if you want to make it worthwhile. Bring to

Mass all the trials and errors, all the joys and sorrow of the day, and the week. Like the little drop of water mingled with the wine at the Offertory, the weak water of your little sacrifice is mingled with the strong wine of Christ's sacrifice. Both of them are consecrated and offered to God together. Then your sacrifice becomes really worthwhile, as it is joined with the greatest Sacrifice of all time, the Sacrifice of Calvary which is renewed at the altar by the priest.

It is typical of the generosity of God that when you offer the gift of yourself and your days to God in the Mass, He closes the Mass by giving you the Gift of gifts, Himself. Holy Communion means perfect, inexpressible contact with God. He is there within you, all your own. Lay your needs at His feet, thank Him for living your days with you. Tell Him you're sorry for the things you did without Him and against His law. But, above all, tell Him you're glad to be so close to Him now, and tell Him you want Him to be your all. Ask Him to stay with you as the days go on. And when you're lonesome or homesick, recall that Christ in Holy Communion unites you to your family and your friends who receive the same Lord, though many miles away. After receiving Holy Communion, you get up from your knees strong with the strength of God, courageous with His courage, inwardly beautiful with His beauty. You can't have all this

help and fail to make the most of life, for you and Christ make an unbeatable team.

Of course, I've only been talking now about two of the seven Sacraments, and I haven't even said one word about Baptism in which you received the life of God in your soul, or Confirmation that makes you an apostle of Christ, a strong and mature Christian. Well, Rome wasn't built in a day. Suppose I conclude by saying that if you stay close to Our Lord through prayer and the Sacraments, I am absolutely sure that all will be well with you. If God is with you, who can be against you? When you are close to Him, you'll never have to ask that question that we began with: "Where to get help...."