

# PRAYER



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The Key to Salvation

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## Protest of the Author

**I**n obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII, of holy memory, I protest that I do not intend to attribute any other than purely human authority to all the miracles, revelations, graces, and incidents contained in this book; neither to the titles “holy” or “blessed,” applied to the servants of God not yet canonized, except in cases where these have been confirmed by the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and by the Holy Apostolic See, of whom I profess myself an obedient son. And, therefore, to their judgment I submit myself and whatever I have written in this book.





## Oblation

**M**y Lord Jesus Christ, behold, I offer Thee this little work in union with that unspeakable charity which moved Thee to say: “Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me any thing in my name, that I will do.” (*John* 14:13–14). I offer this book to Thee on the part of all Thy creatures, because it is Thine ineffable tenderness for them which caused Thee to make them so unlimited a promise, thereby to draw them to Thyself, and to unite them to Thee eternally. Take this book, I beseech Thee, into Thy Divine keeping, that it may glorify the Omnipotence of Thy Father, Thine own Infinite Wisdom, and the unspeakable love of the Holy Ghost. I offer it to Thee in fervent thanksgiving for all the graces which Thou hast bestowed or wilt bestow through this little work, even to the end of the world. Place it, I beseech Thee, upon Thy most merciful Heart, that every word contained therein may be penetrated with Thy Divine sweetness, and fertilized by the merits of Thy holy life and of Thy Five Wounds. Consecrate, by an everlasting benediction, all that is said therein, that it may promote the salvation of those who read it with humble devotion. Inspire them with an irresistible desire of giving themselves up to prayer, that thus may be accomplished that exceedingly great desire of Thine, of manifesting Thyself to them in all Thy

eternal goodness and charity; take them, as it were, into Thy Divine Heart as into a safe harbor of salvation, and breathe into their souls Thy eternal Divine Life and Truth. And as I am an utterly vile and unworthy creature, I offer Thee, in satisfaction for all my deficiencies and omissions, my blindness and ignorance, Thy own sweetest Heart, ever full of Divine thanksgiving and eternal beatitude.

Dear Mother Mary, do you also pray to your Divine Son for all those who may read this little book.

## CHAPTER I

# Introduction

“**E**vil communications corrupt good manners,” is a proverb as old as human experience. Why is it that association with the great and good improves our manners and our morals? I meet a great and good man; I hold intercourse or communion with him, and am never after what I was before. I feel that a virtue has gone forth from him and entered into my life, so that I am not, and can never be again, the man I was before I met him. What is the explanation of this fact? How happens it that I am benefited by my intercourse with the good, and injured by the intercourse with the bad? How is it that one man is able to influence another, whether for good or for evil? What is the meaning of *influence* itself? Influence, inflowing, flowing in—what is this but the fact that our life is the joint product of subject and object? Man lives, and can live only by communion with that which is not himself. This must be said of every living dependent existence. Only God can live in, from, and by Himself alone, uninfluenced and unaffected by anything distinguishable from His own being. But man is not God, is not being in himself, is not complete being, and must find out of himself both his being and his completeness. He lives

not in and from himself alone, but does and must live in and by the life of another.

Cut off man from all communion with external nature, and he dies, for he has no sustenance for his body, and he must starve; cut him off from all communion with moral nature, and he dies, starves, morally; cut him off from all moral communion with a life above his own, and he stagnates, and can make no progress. All this everybody knows and concedes. Then to elevate man, to give him a higher and nobler life, you must give him a higher and nobler object, a higher and nobler life with which to commune. To elevate his subjective life, you must elevate his objective life. From the object must flow into him a higher virtue, an elevating element.

To illustrate: What is the good of each being? It is that which makes the being better and more perfect. It is clear that inferior beings cannot make superior ones better and more perfect. Now the soul, being immortal, is superior to all earthly or perishable things. These, then, cannot make the soul better and more perfect, but rather worse than she is; for he who seeks what is worse than himself makes himself worse than he was before. Therefore, the good—the life of the soul—can be only that which is better and more excellent than the soul herself is. Now God alone is this Good—He being Supreme Goodness Itself. He who possesses God may be said to possess the goodness of all other things, for whatever goodness they possess they have from God. It follows, then, most clearly that the closer our union is with God, or the more intimate our relation to Him is in this life, the more contentment of mind and the greater happiness of soul shall we enjoy.

Now communion between God and man is possible, for like communes with like. Now man has in his own nature a likeness to God. Human reason is the likeness in man of the Divine reason, and hence nothing hinders intercommunion between the reason of God and the reason of man. Though Divine reason, as the object, is independent of the human, and does not live by communion with it, yet the human reason lives only by communion with the Divine, as in all cases the subject lives only by communion with the object, and not reciprocally the object by communion with the subject. By this communion the subject partakes of the object, the human reason of the Divine reason, which is infinite, absolute truth.

Human reason, then, to live, to be, and to remain enlightened, must be and remain in communion with the Divine reason—with God. The more intimate its communion with God is, the more it will be enlightened, happy, and contented. Now this happy communion between the human and Divine reason—between the soul and God—remains established as long as the human reason acknowledges its dependence on the Divine reason, or as long as man obeys God's will, considers God as his Supreme Lord and Good, and the only Source of all true happiness.

When God made man, He might, by an act of His will, have decreed that the human reason should forever obey Him by an unvarying fixed law, as the stars do.

But God has His complacency in the homage of our free will, and so He made us *free* men, and not puppets, that nod the head and bend the knee as the wires are pulled. The Holy Scripture says of everything made by God: "And God

saw that it was good.” Man alone did not receive this praise. Why? It is because man has it in his power to become bad; he is free to choose good or evil, to side with God or with the devil, to follow truth or falsehood—light or darkness—to embrace virtue or vice. It is from this twofold liberty that have risen, from the beginning of the world, two powers, two elements continually combating each other—the good and the bad—the followers and children of God, and the adherents and friends of the devil. St. Michael the Archangel, and Lucifer, the prince of the apostate angels, combat each other in Heaven; Cain and Abel in the family of Adam; Isaac and Ismael in that of Abraham; Jacob and Esau in that of Isaac; Joseph and his brethren in the family of Jacob; Solomon and Absalom in that of David; St. Peter and Judas in the company of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the Apostles and the Roman emperors in the Church of Christ; orthodox faith, or the Catholic Church, and heresy and infidelity, in the kingdom of God on earth; the just and the wicked, in all places; in fact, where is that country, that city, that village, or that family, howsoever small it may be, where these two elements or powers are not found in opposition?

Now it is only the followers of God that enjoy true liberty and happiness. To have the power or liberty to choose evil—to pass over to the devil and enlist and serve under his standard—is no power or liberty at all; it is a mark of weakness and misery, not of perfection. To illustrate: God is Supreme Liberty, and can do all things, yet He cannot sin. To have the power of sinning implies the possibility of becoming a slave of sin. Now the more this power of sinning in a man is

increased or lessened, the more is also increased or lessened this possibility of slavery.

To illustrate: Ask a man whose heart is set on earthly gain, ask him what he thinks of those who renounce all to follow Christ and purchase Heaven; ask him, I say, whether they do wisely? Certainly he will answer, "They do wisely." Ask him again why he himself does not do what he commends in others; he will answer, "It is because I cannot." "Why can you not?" "Because avarice will not let me." It is because he is not free; he is not master of himself, nor of what he possesses. If he is truly master of himself and of what he has, let him lay it out to his own advantage; let him exchange earthly for heavenly goods; if he cannot, let him confess that he is not his own master, but a slave to his money.

It is, then, quite certain that the greatness of our liberty is in proportion to the power which our will has to *will* and to *do* what God wishes us to do. But let it be remembered that the greater this power is, the greater is also the goodness and perfection of our will; and the greater the perfection of our will, the greater is also the perfection of all its good actions; for the goodness and merit of our actions is in proportion to the goodness of our will.

To illustrate: A man who is hardened in sin offends God more grievously when he sins, than another who sins out of frailty, or from a sudden outburst of passion, because he sins by a will determined to evil, which is to sin against the Holy Ghost; so, in like manner, all those good actions which proceed from a will quite determined to what is good, are doubtless of far greater perfection and merit than any others can be. The greater the artist, the more valuable is his work.

So, before God, the better the will, the better and more meritorious are all its good actions.

A soul earnestly endeavoring to practice perfect obedience to the Divine will becomes, by degrees, so united with God as not to be able to will except what God wills; but not to be able to will except what God wills, is, as it were, to be what God is, with whom *to will* and *to be* is but one and the same thing; for to whomsoever power is given to become a child of God, to him is also given power, not indeed to be God Himself, but to be what God is.

To a soul thus disposed, the Lord grants such great favors as it is impossible to describe. He gives her a faith so lively, a confidence so firm, a charity so ardent, a zeal for the salvation of her neighbor so burning, a degree of prayer so sublime, a prudence so unusual, a courage in all difficulties so invincible, a peace so profound, a humility and simplicity of heart so admirable, and sometimes even a spirit so prophetic, together with a gift of performing miracles so extraordinary as to make everyone exclaim: "Truly, that soul can say with St. Paul, 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'" (*Gal. 2:20*).

It was for his obedience to the will of God that Abel obtained from the Lord the testimony that he was just; that Henoah was translated by God, in order that he should not see death. On account of his obedience to the will of God, Noah and his family were saved from the deluge; Abraham became the father of many nations; Joseph was raised to the highest dignity at the court of the King of Egypt. Moses became the great servant, prophet, and lawgiver of the land, and the great performer of miracles with the people of God.



Obedience to the will of God was, for the Jews, at all times, an impregnable rampart against all their enemies; it turned a Saul, a persecutor of the Church, into a Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles; it turned the early Christians into martyrs, for martyrdom does not consist in suffering and dying for the Faith; it consists, rather, in the conformity of the martyr's will to the Divine will, which requires such a kind of death and not another.

On the contrary, disobedience turned the rebellious angels out of Heaven; it turned our First parents, Adam and Eve, out of Paradise; it made Cain a vagabond and a fugitive on earth; it drowned the human race in the waters of the deluge; it burned up the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. Disobedience to the will of God led the Chosen People often into captivity; disobedience to the will of God drowned Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea; disobedience to the will of God turned Nabuchodonosor into a wild beast. It laid the city of Jerusalem in ashes; it has ruined, and will still ruin, whole nations, empires, and kingdoms; it will finally put an end to the world, when all those who always rebelled against the will of God will, in an instant, be hurled into the everlasting flames of Hell, by these irresistible words of the Almighty: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels," there to obey the laws of God's justice forever. Man, then, when in opposition to God's will, is altogether out of his place.

A tool which no longer corresponds to the end for which it was made is cast away; a wheel in a machinery which prevents others from working is taken out and replaced by another; a limb in the body which becomes burdensome and

endangers the functions and life of the others, is cut off and thrown away; a servant who does no longer his master's will is discharged; a rebellious citizen, violating the laws of the state, is put into prison; a child, in an unreasonable opposition to his parents, is disinherited. Thus men naturally hate and reject what is unreasonable or useless, or opposed to, and destructive of, good order, whether natural or moral. What more natural, then, than that the Lord of Heaven and earth, the Author of good sense and of good order, should bear an implacable hatred to disobedience to His holy will?

The man in opposition to the will of God suffers as many pangs as a limb which has been dislocated; he is continually tormented by evil spirits, who have power over a soul that is out of its proper sphere of action; he is no longer under the protection of God, since he has withdrawn from His will, the rule for man's guidance, and has voluntarily left His watchful Providence. God sent Jonah, the prophet, to Nineveh, and he wished to go to Tarsus. He was buffeted by the tempest, cast into the sea, and swallowed by a monster of the deep! Behold what shall come on those who abandon God's will to follow their own passions and inclinations. They shall be tossed, like Jonah, by continual tempests; they will remain like one in a lethargy, in the hold of their vessels, unconscious of sickness or danger, until they perish in the stormy sea, and are swallowed up in Hell! "Know thou, and see that it is a bitter and fearful thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God, when He desired to lead thee in the way of salvation, and that My fear is not with thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts."

God grants to the devil great power over the disobedient. As the Lord permitted a lion to kill a prophet in Juda in punishment for his disobedience to the voice of the Lord, so, in the same manner, He permits the infernal lion to assail the proud and the disobedient, everywhere, with the most filthy temptations, which they feel themselves too weak to resist, and thus fall a prey to his rage. Unless they repent soon, like Jonas, of their sin of idolatry, as it were, they will not be saved, as was the prophet, but will perish in the waves of temptations, and sink into the fathomless abyss of Hell.

Now why is it that many are good, and others are bad; that many follow God, and are saved, and others do not follow Him, and are damned? The answer to this question will be found in the following pages.