

PRAYER

81 Action is worthless without prayer; prayer is worth more with sacrifice.

82 First, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place—very much “in the third place”—action.

83 Prayer is the foundation of the spiritual edifice. Prayer is all-powerful.

84 “*Domine, doce nos orare.*”—“Lord, teach us to pray!”

And our Lord answered, “When you pray, say: *Pater noster, qui es in*

coelis...—“Our Father, who art in heaven...”

How can we fail to appreciate the value of vocal prayer!

85 Slowly. Think about what you’re saying, who is saying it and to whom. Because talking fast, without pausing for reflection, is only noise—the clatter of tin cans.

Along with St Teresa I’ll tell you that, however much you move your lips, I do not call it prayer.

86 Your prayer ought to be liturgical. Would that you were given to reciting the psalms and prayers of the missal instead of private or special prayers!

87 “Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God,” said our Lord. Bread and the word! The host and prayer.

Without these you won't live a supernatural life.

88 You seek the friendship of those who, with their conversation and affection, with their company, help you to bear more easily the exile of this world—although sometimes those friends fail you. I don't see anything wrong with that.

But how is it that you do not seek everyday, more eagerly, the company, the conversation of that great friend who will never fail you?

89 “Mary has chosen the better part,” we read in the holy Gospel. There she is, drinking in the words of the Master. Apparently idle, she is praying and loving. Afterwards she accompanies Jesus in his preaching through towns and villages.

Without prayer, how difficult it is to accompany him!

90 You don't know how to pray? Put yourself in the presence of God, and as soon as you have said, "Lord, I don't know how to pray!" you can be sure you've already begun.

91 You wrote to me: "To pray is to talk with God. But about what?" About what? About him, and yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, great ambitions, daily worries—even your weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions—and love and reparation.

In short, to get to know him and to get to know yourself—"to get acquainted!"

92 "*Et in meditatione mea exardescit ignis.*"—"And in my meditation a fire shall flame out." That is why you go to pray: to become a bonfire, a living flame giving heat and light.

So, when you are not able to go on, when you feel that your fire is dying out,

if you cannot throw on it sweet-smelling logs, throw on the branches and twigs of short vocal prayers and ejaculations, to keep the bonfire burning. And you will not have wasted your time.

93 You see yourself so poor and weak that you recognize you are unworthy of having God listen to you. But, what about the merits of Mary? And the wounds of your Lord? And...aren't you a child of God?

Besides, he listens to you, "*quoniam bonus...*, *quoniam in saeculum misericordia eius*,"—"for he is good, and his mercy endures forever."

94 He has become so small—you see: an infant!—so that you can come close to him with confidence.

95 "*In te, Domine, speravi*"—"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." And to-