

St John Vianney

on prayer



Our catechism teaches us, my children, that prayer is an elevation, an application of our mind and of our heart to God, to make known to Him our wants and to ask for His assistance. We do not see the good God, my children, but He sees us, He hears us, He wills that we should raise towards Him what is most noble in us – our mind and our heart. When we pray with attention, with humility of mind and of heart, we quit the earth, we rise to Heaven, we penetrate into the Bosom of God, we go and converse with the angels and the saints. It was by prayer that the saints reached Heaven: and by prayer we too shall reach it.

Yes, my children, prayer is the source of all graces, the mother of all virtues, the efficacious and universal way by which God wills that we should come to Him.

He says to us: “Ask, and you shall receive.” None but God could make such promises and keep them. See, the good God does not say to us, “Ask such and such a thing, and I will grant it;” but He says in general: “If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.” O my children! ought not this promise to fill us with confidence, and to make us pray fervently all the days of our poor life? Ought we not to be ashamed of our idleness, of our indifference to prayer, when our Divine Saviour, the Dispenser of all graces, has given us such touching examples of it? For you know that the Gospel tells us He prayed often, and even passed the night in prayer. Are we as just, as holy, as this Divine Saviour? Have we no graces to ask for? Let us enter into ourselves; let us consider. Do not the continual needs of

our soul and of our body warn us to have recourse to Him who alone can supply them? How many enemies to vanquish – the devil, the world, and ourselves. How many bad habits to overcome, how many passions to subdue, how many sins to efface! In so frightful and painful a situation, what remains to us, my children? The armor of the saints: prayer, that necessary virtue, indispensable to good as well as to bad Christians....

Within the reach of the ignorant as well as the learned, enjoined to the simple and to the enlightened, it is the virtue of all mankind; it is the science of all the faithful! Everyone on the earth who has a heart, everyone who has the use of reason ought to love and pray to God; to have recourse to Him when He is irritated; to thank Him when He confers favours; to humble themselves when He strikes.

See, my children, we are poor people who have been taught to beg spiritually, and we do not beg. We are sick people, to whom a cure has been promised, and we do not ask for it. The good God does not require of us fine prayers, but prayers which come from the bottom of our heart.

St. Ignatius was once travelling with several of his companions; they each carried on their shoulders a little bag, containing what was most necessary for them on

the journey. A good Christian, seeing that they were fatigued, was interiorly excited to relieve them; he asked them as a favour to let him help them to carry their burdens. They yielded to his entreaties. When they had arrived at the inn, this man who had followed them, seeing that the Fathers knelt down at a little distance from each other to pray, knelt down also. When the Fathers rose again, they were astonished to see that this man had remained prostrate all the time they were praying: they expressed to him their surprise, and asked him what he had been doing. His answer edified them very much, for he said: "I did nothing but say, Those who pray so devoutly are saints: I am their beast of burden: O Lord! I have the intention of doing what they do: I say to You whatever they say." These were afterwards his ordinary words, and he arrived by means of this at a sublime degree of prayer. Thus, my children, you see that there is no one who cannot pray – and pray at all times, and in all places; by night or by day; amid the most severe labours, or in repose; in the country, at home, in travelling. The good God is everywhere ready to hear your prayers, provided you address them to Him with faith and humility.