

THE OUR FATHER.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER III.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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I. - OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

486. *An Orphan in a Cemetery.* -

A poor child was one day in a cemetery, where he was crying bitterly; it was there that the ashes of his beloved parents reposed. Now this child was doubly an orphan; he had lost his mother several years before, and his father had also been taken from his love. How hard and cruel this desertion appeared to him! "Alas!" said he, "I have no longer a father! The hand that toiled to support me is cold in death, mouldering in the grave. Never again shall I see that affectionate smile that rejoiced my heart, when I was wise and good; that mouth, that gave me such fine lessons, is closed forever. There is no one now to love me as that good father did! Ah! but it is hard, hard to have neither father nor mother!" Thus the poor orphan lamented, while his tears fell fast on his father's grave. All at once his tearful eyes fell on a cross. On it was portrayed an angel, who pointed with one hand to heaven, whilst the other held that

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beautiful prayer: *Our Father who art in heaven.*

These words, like a celestial ray, descended suddenly into the poor orphan's soul, and dispelled the darkness that had gathered over it. Wiping away his tears, he clasped his little hands and began to pray anew:

"Can it be, great God of heaven, that I have so soon forgotten you? You still remain my father; I have not lost you. You took my father away from me, and now you are going to take his place. You love children still more than their earthly fathers love them. You gave us your only Son for a brother, and through him we have been admitted to the number of your children; then, Father, who art in heaven, do not you abandon me, for I am a poor helpless orphan all alone on earth!" Thus the orphan prayed; he was consoled, and the Heavenly Father took care of him. He did not, indeed, become a rich man; but, what is infinitely better, he lived happy and contented, and that happiness he found in the simple repetition of the first words of the Lord's Prayer.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 412.

487. *Beau Sejour's Seven Paters.* -

Here, my good friends, is one of the most striking instances I know concerning the Lord's prayer, the Pater Noster. A soldier named Beau Sejour had the pious custom of reciting every day seven *Our Fathers* and seven *Hail Marys*, in honour of the seven joys and seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. He was so faithful to this practice that he never once missed it. If it happened that he remembered, after lying down that he had not fulfilled this duty, he

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rose immediately, whatever time it was, and said the prayers kneeling at the foot of his bed. One battle day, Beau Sejour was in the front rank, in presence of the enemy, awaiting the signal for attack. Remembering

then that he had not said his accustomed prayer, he began to do so, after blessing himself as usual. The other soldiers who were beside him, seeing Beau Sejour at his prayers, began to make merry at his expense; they went so far as to call him a coward, a poltroon, and such like. The word flew from mouth to mouth: - "Beau Sejour is afraid," -- "Beau Sejour is a devotee!" He heard all this going on, but nevertheless continued his prayer, quite unconcerned. But what happened, dear children, some moments after? The enemy made their first charge, and, wonderful to relate, of his whole rank Beau Sejour alone remained standing; he saw lying dead at his feet all those who, but a moment before, were ridiculing him for his piety! All the rest of the battle, which was long and bloody, and even during the whole campaign, a tedious and disastrous one, he received no wound. After the war he obtained his discharge, and returned home safe and sound, fully resolved never to leave off a practice he had found so beneficial.

- DEBUSSI, *Nouv. Mois de Marie*.

488. *The Young Shepherd's Prayer*. -

You know, dear friends, it was Our Lord himself who taught us to pray by saying the *Our Father*; that simple prayer is enough of itself. A holy priest, travelling in the neighbourhood of Clermont, in Auvergne, France, perceived

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not far from the road a young shepherd, in whom he thought he recognized, by his grave and collected mien, something supernatural. He was feeding his flock. Approaching the boy the priest said "How, my friend, you are alone here all the day! You must be lonely." -- "Oh no, father, I am not a bit lonely, I am always busy." -- "And what is your occupation? what do you do, my child, to prevent you from being lonely?" -- "Here is what I do, reverend father! - I know a beautiful prayer, - oh! and it is a beautiful, a consoling prayer! So my greatest happiness is to say it." - "But you do not pray all day long, do you?" -- "All day long, father, and yet I cannot get to the end of my prayer; it is so beautiful, so sweet, that I want nothing more to fill my heart with joy." -- "And what prayer is it? Truly, it must be very long, since you cannot say it in a whole day." -- "Oh! no, it is not long, it is, on the contrary, very short." -- "I do not understand you; you say it is very short, and yet you cannot finish it in one day?" -- "Why, you see, father, that's because I love my prayer so much; it is so touching that as soon as I begin to say it the tears flow from my eyes in spite of me, and so it is the whole day long." -- "That is all very well, but you have not told me what this short prayer is and how you recite it." -- "That prayer, reverend father, is the *Our Father*. - Here is how and what I do to say it. Before I begin, I raise my heart to God; then I say, 'Our Father who art in heaven.' There I stop, thinking of the favour

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God bestows upon me in allowing me to call him my Father. Is it possible that I, a poor little shepherd, have God for a Father, and a God so good, so great, so powerful? a God who made that beautiful sky, that shining sun, this earth with its rivers, its forests, its mountains? Yes, He permits me, poor wretched little creature, who am nothing, to say to Him, '*My Father!*' These thoughts, reverend father, and many others that occur to me, which it would take too long to tell you, fill me with admiration, gratitude, and love; then I begin to weep, and cannot go on with my prayer. And then, father, you see there below between those two trees, far, far away behind the third hill, that little village, with only a few houses?" - "Yes."

"Well! that's where I live, and my family is the poorest in it. Oh! the wonderful goodness of God, to think that I can call Him my Father, as well as the greatest gentleman in the city! I am a child of God just as he is!" The priest, much affected, went away, saying: "Continue to pray thus, my young friend, and God will bless you." What better could he say?

- *Recomp. Hebdom. (Daily Rewards.)*

489. *A Swearer who Says His "Our Father."* -

If we meditated well on the Lord's Prayer, my dear children, we should find therein all religion, and see that that prayer is truly sublime. I remember a little story about that, which I am going to tell you. An Englishman, in the town of Shelton, had the bad habit of swearing often and on the most trifling account. He was cured of it in a very singular way

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by a little girl of five or six years old. The child unable to bear without indignation the sacrilegious words vomited forth by this man, one day asked her mother if she thought Mr So-and-so said the Lord's Prayer every day. The mother answered that she did not know. The little girl was determined to make herself sure, and watching him closely, she one day perceived him really saying the Lord's Prayer. Soon after, when an opportunity offered, the most revolting blasphemies were heard again. The little girl went up to him and said with a very serious air: "Mr. So-and-so you said the Lord's Prayer this morning, and gave God the name of father?" -- "Well, yes! I did. But why do you ask the question?" -- "Why, how could you call Him your father when you swear all day long and grievously offend Him?" The culprit, not expecting any such question, especially from a little child, felt the blush rising to his forehead, and what is better, he was never after heard to curse or swear. So he could ever after say his *Our Father* without being ashamed.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 150.

II. - THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

490. *The Revelations of Little Samuel.* -

Doubtless you know, dear friends, the story of the little Samuel. The most interesting incident of his life is undoubtedly, what happened to him at the age of twelve years. Therein we see how we ought to

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obey the will of God. One night when he was sleeping in the tent in which was kept the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord called him: "Samuel! Samuel!" He rises immediately, runs to the high priest Heli, and says: "Here I am; you called me." -- "I did not call you, my son," answered Heli; "go back and sleep." He goes back and again falls asleep. But the Lord having called him again, he rises and returns to the high priest, saying: "Here I am, for you did call me." Heli answers as before: "My son, I did not call you; go and sleep in peace." The boy obeyed without saying a word. The Lord having called him a third time, he rises, goes again to Heli, and once more says: "You called me; here I am." Then Heli, understanding that it was the Lord who had called Samuel, told him: "Go and sleep; and if you are again called, you will say: 'Speak, Lord, Your servant hears.'" Samuel went back to his bed, and the Lord having appeared to him and again called him twice with his own name, he answered, as Heli had told him: "Speak, Lord, Your servant hears." The Lord then declared to him that the punishment wherewith he had threatened Heli should soon be accomplished. We find in this simple story the way in which we ought to do the will of God, and obey Him everywhere and in all things.

- *1st Book of Kings*, (called *I Samuel* in Hebrew based Bibles) Chapter III.

491. *I Shall One Day Reign in Heaven.* -

The very thought of the happiness that awaits us, my dear friends, should suffice to make us bear the miseries of

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life. John Mosch, having renounced the world and retired to the Monastery of St. Theodosius, near Jerusalem, was sent to Egypt, by his superior, on some business which would take many months to transact. There was then in a desert of Libya a solitary named Leo, who was originally from Cappadocia. His virtues were so much extolled that John resolved to go and see him. He found him just as he had been described. He remarked that he was very humble and very charitable, that he loved silence and seclusion, that he was poor in heart, and much detached from earthly things. This good brother Leo sighed for the happiness of heaven, and to show the hope he had of obtaining it, he often said: *I shall one day reign*. John and others who did not understand the meaning of these words, sometimes said to him, half in jest, half in earnest, that Cappadocia had not yet produced any persons who might wear the crown. But still he kept repeating: *Yes, I shall one day*

reign. Then he added some words to make them understand that, by those words, he meant to speak of eternal glory. Thus was he truly of the number of those whom the Gospel styles the children of the kingdom, who have a taste for things above, and already live in Heaven by the desire they have to reign with Christ throughout the ages of eternity. John Mosch went away edified from the cell of that religious, who appeared so poor in the eyes of the world, and who now reigns gloriously in Heaven.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, III., 136.

492. *The Secret of Working Miracles*. -

I am sure,

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my dear children, you would like to be able to work miracles like the saints. Here is a secret which succeeded perfectly with one of them; try it and you shall see. In a convent of Spain there lived, in the fourteenth century, a monk whose prayers wrought numerous cures. People were amazed, and all the more so because there were no extraordinary signs of sanctity about the man. The Superior of the convent took him aside one day, and wished to know how it was that the Lord wrought such prodigious cures by his intermediation. "I am surprised myself;" answered the good monk, "that God deigns to make use of a miserable sinner like me to relieve and cure the sick. I do not owe that favour to any particular virtue. Hitherto, I have merely done all I could to conform in all things to the will of God. When I am sick, I say to the Lord: 'My God, Your will be done!' If I am obliged, by order of my superiors, to go to another house, I likewise see in that order the will of God, and I say again, 'Your will be done!'" - "But, brother," again asked the Abbot, "how and what did you do the other day when some malicious person set fire to our court and caused us so much damage?"

"Father," said the religious, "I contented myself with saying the Pater, the Our Father, low to myself, dwelling particularly on the petition, '*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!*'" Here the Abbot recognized very clearly that it was this entire submission to the will of God which had made this good and simple religious one of the most intimate friends of the

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Lord, and had, consequently, won for him the gift of miracles. Let us do the same thing, my friends, and if God does not grant us the same gift, He will, at least, bestow upon us other graces not less precious.

- SCHMID et BELET. *Cat, Hist.*, I., 457.

493. *A Woman who Dares to Prefer Her Own Will to that of God*. -

Speaking of that petition of the Lord's Prayer - "Your will be done," I remember a terrible story, which took place in Germany about the year 1825, if I am not mistaken. A woman had but one child, a boy. This child fell ill, and the disease made such fearful progress that all remedies were alike powerless. It was all over with him; he was going to die. At first the mother was a prey to mortal anguish, but when she saw clearly that she was about to lose her poor child, despair took away her reason, for that son was dearer to her than all the world, dearer even than God, as you are about to see. The pastor of the parish, hearing of the child's illness, went to the house to try to console the mother, and inspire her with sentiments of resignation; alas! all he could say had no effect on the mind of the unfortunate woman. He tried another means; standing near the sick bed, he began to pray, not so much for the child as for his mother. He said, among other things: "Lord, if it be Your will, restore health to this poor child!" The mother, hearing this, began to cry out in a fury of anger: "Say not, *if it be Your will*; I cannot bear those words; it *must* be His will. God cannot allow my child to die; I must have him

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live." The priest was terrified by these words; he had nothing to do but retire sad and afflicted. He continued to pray for the Will of the Father to be done. Contrary to his expectation, and to the indescribable satisfaction of the mother, the child was perfectly restored to health. But alas! it would have been better if he had died, for he grew in malice and in wickedness according as he advanced in age. He overwhelmed his unhappy mother with sorrow, became an abandoned ruffian, and to crown his misfortune, was condemned to die on a scaffold, and that in the very presence of her who had refused to resign herself to the will of God! She now

offered a prayer of contrition for her stubbornness of heart and was determined to now accept His will in all things. She begged of her Heavenly Father that He would bestow the grace of final repentance on the son who had brought so much agony of heart to her. A great lesson for us all, dear friends; let us never forget it.
- SCHMID et BELET *Cat. Hist.*, I., 460.

III. - GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

494. *An Emperor on Bread and Water.* -

I have read in the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert* a curious story about *daily bread*. A solitary, who led a most holy life, and who gave himself no concern about what related merely to his body, had settled within a short distance of Constantinople, and attracted the admiration of every one by his confidence in Divine Providence. Those words of the Lord's Prayer *Give us this day our daily bread*, made all his hope rest in the Heavenly Father, and in this he had never been deceived. The Emperor Theodosius having heard him spoken of, wished much to see him. One day, dressed as a private individual, he climbed the mountain side to the cell of this good

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religious. He had a long conversation with him. At the end of some hours the Emperor, pressed by hunger, asked the solitary if he could give him something to eat. "Yes, sir," he answered, "here is a piece of bread and a pitcher of water; I have nothing else to offer you." Theodosius took the piece of bread and ate it with much relish. He then asked the solitary if he were content in his position. "I am so happy in it," he replied, "that I would not change it for that of the Emperor. I have nothing; I wish for nothing; no one disturbs me. If I am in want of any necessary thing, I ask it of Providence, who never deserts me." - "Do you know me?" said the Emperor. "No, sir, I never saw you before." - "Well, I am Theodosius; I came to edify myself a little while in your company. Oh! that it were given to me to share your happiness, to pass the rest of my life in this solitude, far from the troubles of the world, and to eat like you a piece of common bread. Then, at least, I could prepare well to appear before God." The Emperor retired, but from that day forth he always cherished a certain wish to enjoy the true, pure happiness of those who possess nothing, who desire nothing, and who place all their confidence in the Lord.

- Pere MARIN, *Vies des Peres des Deserts.* (*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*)

495. *A New Pater Composed by a Child.* -

You know, dear friends, that the *Pater* (the Our Father) was taught us by Our Lord himself. I know a little child who took the liberty of making singular changes in it. Listen: One morning his mother, named Teresa, said to her

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five children, all very young yet: "My dear children, I can give you nothing for breakfast this morning; I have no bread, no flour, not even an egg in the whole house; I have not been able to earn anything these days past; pray to God to assist us, for He is rich and powerful, and he says: 'Come to me all you who are afflicted, and I will relieve you'." Little Christian, the child of whom I have just spoken, scarcely six years old, went away fasting and very sorrowful to school. He passed the church door, went in and knelt before the altar. Seeing no one, he prayed aloud as follows: "Our Father, who art in heaven, we are five poor children who have nothing to eat. Our mother has neither bread, nor flour, not even an egg; give us something to eat, that we and our dear mother may not die of hunger. O my God! come to our assistance! You who are so rich and so powerful, it is easy for you to relieve us! You promised you would, and now is the time to keep your promise." So the good little boy prayed in the simplicity of his heart, then he went to school. What was his surprise on returning home to see on the table a big loaf of bread, a large dish of flour, and a whole basket of eggs.

"Ah! God be praised," he cried, transported with joy, "He has heard my prayer. Tell me, mother, wasn't it an angel that brought you all that through the window?" - "No, my child," answered the mother, "yet God heard your prayer. When you were praying before the altar, the Mayor's wife happened to be kneeling in a

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side-chapel near you. You could not see her, but she saw and heard you. That charitable lady hastened immediately to provide for our wants; she is the good angel whom God sent to our assistance. Now, my dear children, thank the good God, rejoice, and never forget the beautiful maxim - "If we only leave all to God, He will be our best provider."

- Abbe MULLOIS *Mois de Marie de tout le Monde*, 86.

496. *The Bread of the Poor.* -

Let us always have confidence in the goodness of God, dear friends. He will find means to give us our daily bread. One day the virtuous Mary Leczinska, Queen of France, was walking alone in the broad alleys of the park of Versailles. She met a poor woman very badly clad, crossing it with rapid steps; she had a pitcher in her hand, carried a little child on her arm, and was followed by others who had hold of her skirts. The queen called her. "Where are you going so fast, my good woman?"

-- "Madam, I'm going with soup to my man." -- "And what is your man doing?"

-- "He is attending the masons and assisting them in carrying the bricks."

-- "How much does he earn a day?"

-- "Twelve sous now, but sometimes he gets only ten." -- "Have you any ground or land to till?" -- "No, madam!" -- "How many children have you?" -- "I have five of them now, all very young." -- "And do you earn anything yourself?"

-- "No, madam, I have enough to do for my own family." -- "How do you manage, then, to keep your house and support seven persons on twelve sous a day, sometimes on ten?" -- "Ah! madam, there's my secret," showing a key that

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hung from her girdle. "I lock up my bread, and try to have always some for my man. If I let these children have their way, they would eat in a single day what ought to feed them for a week." The good princess, touched even to tears by this simple tale, slipped ten gold pieces into the poor woman's hand, telling her: "That will give a little more bread to your children every day; let them think a little of me when they say the Lord's Prayer."

- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, 347.

497. *A New Petition in the Lord's Prayer.* -

I once heard a holy teaching brother recount the following story to some of the young pupils he loved to gather around him in the late afternoons and to talk them of the Love of God. It was before the outbreak of the Great War.

'How I love, dear friends, children who are pious with faith and simplicity! The good God himself takes pleasure in granting them the object of their petitions, as we see from a circumstance that took place in Paris some ten or fifteen years ago. A very wealthy family had the misfortune to lose in one day its head and its whole fortune. Some days after, the poor mother could give her little girl, scarce six years of age and now an orphan, nothing but dry bread for breakfast, dinner and supper. At night, when she came to put the dear child to bed, she made her kneel down with her and say her prayers. The little Augustina then began: "*Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven; give us this day our daily bread*" - here she stops, and turning to her mother, says, with simplicity, "Mamma, cannot I ask for something with my bread?" -- "Yes, my dear, I am willing that you should." And the mother wiped away a trickling

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tear. Then the little one went on. "*Give us this day our daily bread and something to take with it.*" On the following day, the wretch who had ruined this poor family confessed his fraud to the unhappy mother, brought her five thousand francs of what he had taken unjustly, and promised the rest in a short time; he owed her twenty thousand. You see, dear friends, how speedily the simple prayer of little Augustina was heard and answered.

- F. A. M., *Joyeux Passe-Temps de la Jeunesse*, 227.