

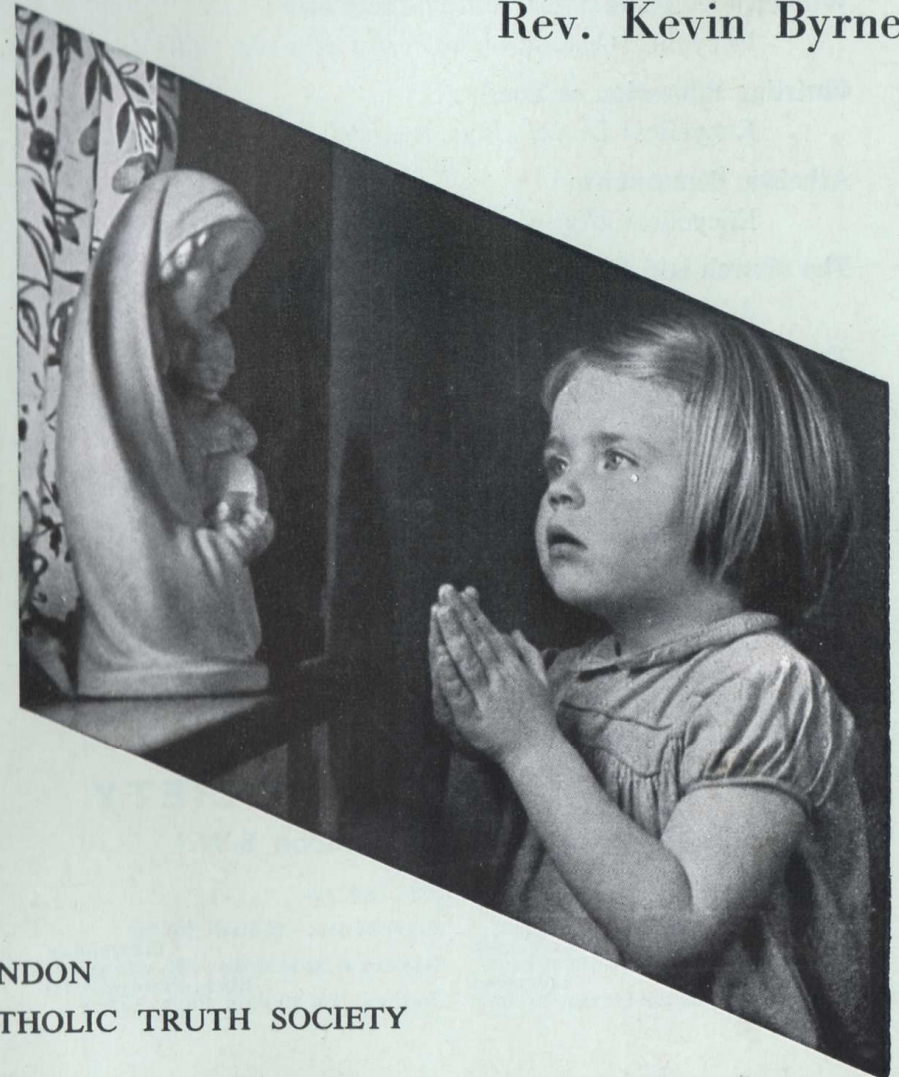
FAMILY PRAYERS

and

Mixed Marriages

by

Rev. Kevin Byrne



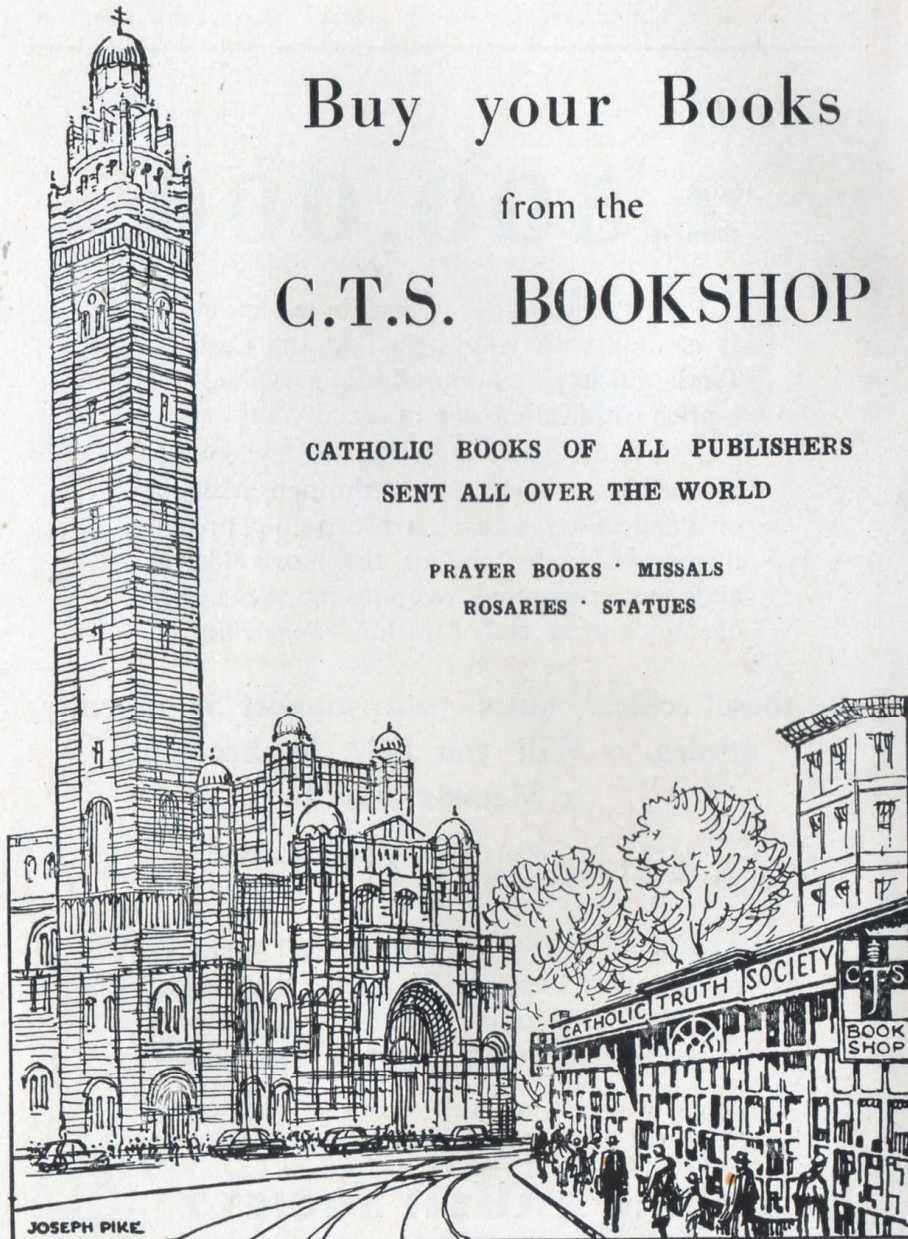
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Family Prayers and Mixed Marriages

BY REV. KEVIN BYRNE

I AM addressing myself in this pamphlet to any non-Catholic who is married to a Catholic. If you happen to belong to the gentle sex, I feel sure that you will not be upset when I refer to you as a man. You will be kind and patient enough to make the necessary changes in your own mind, whereas the unadaptable male resents being referred to as 'she'. I know that you are a good man, because otherwise your wife would not consider it an honour to have married you, but she does, no matter what she may pretend. I also know that you are a good Christian, because if you were not, your wife would not have troubled to give you this pamphlet on family prayers—the pagans of this country do not pray. However, even though you believe in the necessity of prayer, and the power of prayer, this business of family prayers may seem a bit too much of a good thing—and, of course, you are of a different religion from the rest of the family, which makes it rather difficult to pray together.

Well, let us take the two questions in the order in which they have appeared. Why should we have family prayers? We know that we must pray privately, as individuals, but why must we pray as a family? We can find the answer by just thinking a little about *why* we must pray privately. We accept the duty, but why? When we have our reasons, we shall easily see that the same sort of reasons can be given for saying family prayers.

NATURAL INSTINCT

Prayer is a thing which comes naturally to the soul of mankind. Since Christ came, we have been able to pray far more perfectly than ever before, because He taught us how to pray, and He gave us the *Our Father* as the model for all time. But before He came, men prayed, and in countries where our Lord has never been preached, men pray. Prayer, like God's commandments, is written in the heart of man. He must have the help of God before he can pray, but God has put instincts and ideas in his mind which incline him towards prayer. If he follows these

instincts, and develops these ideas and accepts God's help, he will pray even if he has not yet been made a full member of God's family by Baptism. One of our great instincts is gratitude. When a kind old lady gives a boy ten shillings, he is expected to say 'Thank you'. We all ought to be grateful for things which are done for us. Much bad blood is caused because of ingratitude—'I shouldn't have minded', we are told, 'if he had only shown that he appreciated my generosity'. To say 'Thank you' is, indeed, the least we can do, but everybody expects that minimum as the automatic response to a kind action.

It is natural for us to be grateful. It is also natural for us to respect those who are cleverer than ourselves, or stronger, or more important, or even—although we stoutly deny it—those who are richer. A small boy is rapt in hero-worship of his big brother with his rifle, and his immense greatcoat and his iron-shod boots. We naturally revere the queen, and, at least in principle, we respect the Government. We admire those who can quote volumes of poetry without taking thought or breath. We collect the autographs of famous footballers, actors, xylophone players and all the rest of them. We try to be superior, but we do admire excellence in other people, in whatever things they excel. We respect and have reverence for it, because it is natural to us.

We feel this reverence and respect particularly for our parents. They gave us life; they listened undismayed to our infant screams, and suffered our childish faults in moderate silence; they educated us, with some help from the State; they fed us; they clothed us; they even loved us. In return, there waxes and grows in every man a mysterious feeling of awe, respect, reverence and love for his parents. One of the worst things we can say about anyone is that he neglects his parents, or is cruel to them; and the greatest punishment he can receive is to be treated in the same way by his own children because it is unnatural for children not to reverence their parents. If we follow our instincts, we must fulfil our duties to them.

Another basic urge of mankind is to ask for things. We are not usually patient enough to sit down and wait for good things to come to us—and, of course, if we were to do so, they wouldn't come. We must either ask for what we want, or work for it; then, when we have worked, we ask it as our due. It is sometimes possible to acquire things by just taking them without asking, but,

by and large, this is frowned on by the common consent of the whole human race. They call it stealing. And although we do not really mind certain people taking things from us, we always like to be asked. Sometimes this is just our vanity or our pique, but usually it is because we realize instinctively that it is the right thing between humans to ask for what we want.

To ask for things makes us realize that we are ourselves lacking in some respects (which keeps us from being proud and independent); it gives due honour to someone else as the owner of things which we do not possess; it safeguards the natural rights of private property; it offers security to those who are weak; and, of course, it always gives the other a chance to refuse, thus bringing home to us that we are not in the privileged position of modern children who have only to ask, in order to receive, even if it makes them sick.

We shall not always receive what we ask for from men, but we know that if we do not ask we certainly shall not receive. Asking is natural to us. That is why, when we want to show how clever and almost humanly intelligent our dog is, we train him to beg, even at the expense of the poor animal's dignity. It is a very human thing to ask for favours although we do not express ourselves by flopping backward on the ground with our front paws in the air.

If, however, at any time we have gone against any of the natural instincts we have been describing, and have done what everyone realizes is wrong, we feel bound to apologize. If we have hurt someone, we hasten to do what we can to make amends. To say that we are sorry is necessary to our peace of mind; it is unnatural not to do so. Quarrels of years can be healed by an apology. Once we express regret for having treated others unjustly, a great cloud is lifted. We may still owe them a large sum of money, but when once we have promised to pay it back, and especially when we have begun to do so, our offence is forgiven. When we have completely paid our debt, and satisfied every claim, it is forgotten.

Here, then, we have four great instincts which are deeply implanted in our hearts—gratitude for favours, reverence for those who are in some way greater than ourselves, petition for things we need, and reparation for what we have done wrong. There are many other inclinations which are natural to us, but we take these four as an example.

PRIVATE PRAYER IS NATURAL

If we now go on to think of God, and our relations to Him, we shall be led by these inclinations to pray. God has given us everything. There is no need to write a list of our presents from Him because it includes everything good which we value. There is nothing good which does not come from God, because all things were made by Him. There is much evil in the world, but a great deal of it is brought about by sin. We sin when we abuse our free-will to act in defiance of God's commandments. We have only ourselves to blame if we bring evil on ourselves by sin.

Some things, like sickness or poverty, are often not caused by sin, or not by the sins of those who suffer from them, but they form part of the natural hazards of life, like bunkers on a golf-course. God has put them there in order to test us, but if we use them as God intended, even these physical evils will bring us good in this world, or in the next.

Everything good, then, is from God. He showers favours on us, and He keeps us from misfortunes, so that we are compelled to be grateful to Him, to say 'Thank you' to Him. We are grateful to all those who do us good, from our open-handed neighbours to those who send us food from abroad. It would be monstrous to make exceptions where God is concerned and to let Him be the only one in the world whom we refuse to thank. We tell God of our gratitude and full appreciation of His goodness. This is one form of prayer.

Of course, there are other ways. God is All-Perfect, He is excellent in every respect, so excellent that there is no limit to His Perfections, and we call Him Infinite—limitless—in all that is good. Therefore we must respect Him, and revere Him, because it is natural for us to do so, and this respect and reverence which we owe to God is called Adoration. It is a special sort of reverence which is given to God alone and to nobody else, because no one else can be compared to God.

Adoration, then, is another way of prayer. And when we think of God's adorable nature, and how He is so perfect in every way, self-sufficient, all-powerful, never-failing, we become conscious of how weak and feeble we are. We are quite helpless. We have no hold on life ; just a little water or fire is enough to kill us. We are subject to disease and poverty. Frequently we are placed in positions where no human being can help us or can even under-

stand the depths of our troubles. We feel urged to ask His help. A child asks his parents, because he knows that they will help if they can ; and a man asks his friends, because he can be sure of sympathy, even if they have nothing else to offer. But God can always help, and God is full of sympathy and love, because He made us, and is both father and mother to us. We ask God's help, and this also is a prayer.

Sometimes, however, we cannot ask, because we are wretched in the knowledge that we have offended this good God. We know that He is good, and that His commandments are wise and just, and for our well-being, yet we have sinned. We must apologize, although that is too weak a word to express what we mean by making up for sin. Mere apology is not sufficient, if we have gravely injured somebody. We must also make reparation, or give compensation, in some way. But our sins have gravely injured God, in the sense that they are an enormity in His sight, and a frightful affront to Him who has been all-good to us. Therefore, in order to make reparation for our sins, we must pray, we must sacrifice, we must make amends to the best of our ability. All these ways of prayer, adoration, thanksgiving, asking favours and pardon for sin, are common to the whole of mankind—even to those who do not yet know Christianity, and all men who live good lives according to their own lights know it is only right for them to pray in these ways. We must all pray privately.

Indeed, if we were to think a little further on the same lines, we should discover that the State should also pray ; that the State should offer public prayers for the same reason that we should offer private prayers—because the State, like ourselves, was made by God, and in gratitude, in sorrow, in petition, the State should humbly adore Him. But to discuss it further might be wearisome and so, having merely mentioned the fact, we pass on to something which interests you more—your own family.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FAMILY ?

Your family is part of you, it is an extension of your own personality. You and your family are inextricably bound together into one unit. Society is made up of families, not of individuals. The State is not like a giant ant-heap, with millions of lonely citizens rushing in and out of its citadel with huge burdens on their backs, and no thoughts in their heads but to increase productivity or perish. The State is composed of

thousands of families, just as the body is composed of thousands of cells ; and God made the family.

Only within the loving shelter of a family can a child be adequately educated in body and soul. God intended the human race to continue, and if it were not for the natural institution of marriage—that permanent union of man and wife in mutual love and fidelity—the human race could not remain, because the children could not survive without it. The family was made by God. Therefore the family also should, under its own roof, openly adore God, thank Him for His benefits, beg Him to continue His protection, and ask His pardon for all the sins, great or small, which have been committed by the members of that family.

Admittedly, if all the family are fulfilling their religious duties, if they say their individual prayers, if God is spoken of with due honour in the family circle, and there are reminders of God and heavenly things in the form of religious books and pictures and statues, we cannot say that the family is not religious. But can a family give God perfect honour and glory, if its members do not pray together, when there is very little to prevent them? No ; such a family is not doing enough. God has brought them together in every possible way—they live within the same walls, they eat at the same table, they meet the same friends ; they share their recreation, their family jokes, their happiness, and they give each other mutual consolation in sorrow. All the family receive the same favours from God, it is to Him they owe these communal and public benefits. They ought to recognize these benefits, communally and publicly. They should have family prayers.

We are quite certain of this. You personally should pray, because God made you. The State should pray, because God made it, and your family should pray because God also, in His goodness, made your family, and lent those children to you that you might keep them and guard them for Him. People are beginning to realize this more and more.

THE FILM STARS' FAMILY PRAYERS

When a priest speaks of family prayers, you expect it ; when an ordinary working man says it, you perhaps take more notice ; but even film stars are saying it now. We know what is frequently found among film stars—polygamy, materialism, and unbelievably high charges for their valueless time—but I assure you that

many of them are now keenly interested in the spread of the old Christian custom of family prayers. There is a weekly radio programme in the U.S.A. called 'Family Theatre', contributed to by the most famous script writers in the country—True Boardman and Charles Tazewell are now engaged in preparing their own half-hour—and this programme is for the spread of family prayers and that alone. None of the writers and none of the actors are paid for their work, they get nothing out of it (although they receive God's blessing, and reckon that as the highest possible salary).

As for the actors themselves—their names read like a 'Hit Parade'. Bing Crosby, Loretta Young, Don Ameche, Charles Boyer, Joe E. Brown, Joan Leslie, Dick Haymes, Lionel Barrymore, Maureen O'Hara, Charles Bickford, Irene Dunne, Jeanne Crain, Dennis Day, Fibber McGee, Barry Fitzgerald, Ruth Hussey, William Gargan, Frank McHugh, Pat O'Brien, Gregory Peck, Maureen O'Sullivan and James Stewart are among the ever-growing number who have signed individual unremunerated contracts to join in this programme. This is the agreement they have signed :—

'To offer our American families the most necessary and fundamental protection against the dangers of our age, and for the purpose of bringing down on our country the special blessing of Almighty God, I am willing to help realize the proposed radio plan (now in action) of popularizing the practice of daily Family Prayers.'

These men and women are among the most highly-paid members of a rich and great nation, they live in luxurious surroundings, they are subject to every form of material temptation, yet in spite of it—perhaps because of it—they are ready to turn to God with their families and offer themselves to Him in family prayer. Their example is indeed inspiring to all men and women in this modern age, when the opinion is held and openly expressed that only cranks pray, and only fanatics would have family prayers. We begin to realize that in a properly ordered society, one that is running smoothly, in peace, on the lines of the Ten Commandments, with Christ as the Captain and the Helmsman, the normal man *will* pray, and he will pray with his family, and only cranks and fanatics will dare to attack such an obviously right and patently necessary institution as Family Prayer.

YOUR FAMILY MATTERS MOST

Think of your own family, now that you have read so far—your own Christian family. It has always been the custom for a Christian family to pray together. There is nothing new in the suggestion. It is not a modern stunt. It is part of the Christian tradition. When Christianity languishes, this decay is marked, and even hastened by the absence of prayer in the home. If Christianity is flourishing, or if it is to flourish in a family, the family must pay God its debt of prayer.

Your family is Christian. Christ has joined you and your wife in the sacrament of matrimony, and through this sacrament Christ gives you the graces to remain ever faithful to each other amidst an 'adulterous generation'. Christ gives you the help to live together in harmony, despite the frequent difficulties of your state. Christ has given you children who are also the children of God by Baptism; and Christ has given you the glad duty of bringing up your children as Christians, in the fullest sense of the word.

A Christian should be another Christ, one who is fired with a deep and passionate love of God our Father, one completely devoted to God, one who shows this love by his self-sacrificing generosity to his neighbours. If you are to lead your children to complete Christian maturity, then give their souls the food of family prayers. In family prayers they will receive impressions which will never be erased, and they will learn by wonderful experience that their parents love God, and that when they tell their children to love God, they really mean it because they themselves practise it. Christ already reigns over your family, because you have all admitted Him as King over your inmost hearts. Do not allow Him to remain a hidden king, dwelling in obscurity, but give Him public honour in your family. Invite Him, by family prayers, to reign over every activity and to be always with you. Then, when the hour of darkness comes, and death or misfortune brings grief and sadness to your home, you will find an assured refuge in the pity and strength and love which flow from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, whom you have so trustfully asked to protect you.

You know that the world is full of the sorrows of separation. The Communists hate the family, because it will not worship the

State, and so it is their avowed aim to break it up. A man must do what he is told, even if it is wrong, if it is against all that he holds dear, if it is against his wishes and inclinations and abilities. His beloved family is the weapon used against himself. He will be refused rations for them. He will be directed to labour in distant parts. He will be imprisoned, and they will starve. His wife will be arrested. His children will be sent away to anti-God cattle-shed schools, where they will be made to forget that they were ever blessed with parents. All these are threats, but they have been put into practice almost as often as they have been insinuated, and the world groans with the grief of stricken families. It may be that if you will begin family prayers now, if you will kneel down before the youngest child goes to bed, and pray together, you will turn away God's anger from the world, and bring the hearts of wicked men back to God, before it is too late to save your own family.

The crisis is growing. It is a struggle between the Christian State, composed of Christian families, and the Communist State, with no families, but only herds. In a year or two we may be engulfed, as many other countries before us. The tide must turn, because God is not mocked. God will not tolerate the continuous swelling of pride and hatred against all that is good. But this does not mean that we shall be saved. Only God knows when He will say 'Enough', and it may be when it is too late for you, when you are dead, and your family scattered, and your home deserted. Do all that is possible now, while there is yet time, and if God in His mercy will save our country from ruin and death, pray for the other families, who have no hope but in God, whose love you can enkindle by your own.

The difficulty still remains, that you are of a different religion from your wife and family. This is a great pity. You may not think so. You may never have felt it. In that case, there can be no objection to family prayers, except that Catholic prayers and practices are frequently strange to you—but if you look at the prayers I have suggested, I think you will find that they come very easily, and that you can therefore begin family prayers as soon as you like. If, on the other hand, you have begun to sense some feeling of tragedy in being divided from your wife in your worship of God—the thing that matters most in the world—then surely you will be impelled even more to pray as a family. If 'the prayer of a just man availeth much', then the united

prayers of a just man and his family will be of even greater value in the sight of God. He will be touched by your prayers, and will give you consolation in a way best known to Him.

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SUGGESTED PRAYERS

I recommend to you these following prayers. You will find very little that is strange to you, and nothing, I fancy, that you cannot accept. There are many such prayers in Catholic prayer books. If you would prefer to use others, then by all means do so. After the prayers you will find a few notes of explanation or comment on each one. I have omitted many of our customary and specifically Catholic prayers, so as not to impose too great demands on your forbearance. If you find any minor difficulties, then argue them out with your wife, but do not let them prevent you from accepting the principle that a Christian family should pray together every evening to our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lover, our Lord and our God.

1. 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 ; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ; and lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

2. Hail, Mary, full of grace ; the Lord is with thee ; blessed

art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

3. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

4. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord ; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary ; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried ; He descended into hell ; the third day He rose again from the dead ; He ascended into heaven ; sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

5. My God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.

6. My God, I hope in Thee, for grace and for glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy and Thy power.

7. My God, because Thou art so good, I love Thee with all my heart, and for Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself.

8. O my God, I firmly believe that Thou art here and perfectly seest me, and that Thou art looking at all my actions, all my thoughts, and the most secret motions of my heart. Thou watchest over me with a wonderful love, every moment giving favours and keeping me from evil. Blessed be Thy Holy Name, and may all creation bless Thy sweet goodness, for the benefits which I have ever received from Thee, and particularly this day. Never allow me to be so wicked as to be ungrateful for all Thou hast done for me, or to offend Thee in return for Thy many blessings.

9. O my good God, I hate and detest all the sins which I have committed against Thee during my life, and especially the sins of this day, because Thou art so good, and sin displeases Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and make a firm resolution, by the help of Thy holy grace, never more to offend Thee. I promise not to do the things which may lead me into sin. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, and pardon me, because I am a wicked sinner. In the name of Thy beloved Son Jesus, I humbly beg of Thee to wash my soul with His Precious Blood, so that my sins may be entirely forgiven.

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An unfortunate thing about mixed marriages, as you will agree, is that often the children are far less religious than they would have been if their parents had married partners of their own religion. The parents cannot go to church together, and the children are starved of religion in the home. They are brought up spiritually cross-eyed, looking two ways at their two parents, and they think that, since their father and mother are united in everything else, but divided in religion, then religion cannot be of much importance, and they discard it as soon as they can. That will be a danger in your home, but you can go some way to prevent it by family prayers. Show them that Christianity is vitally important, and that you both prize it as your greatest possession—the pearl of the Gospel. And if you cannot yet, in conscience, worship in the Catholic Church with your wife and family, at least give them your whole-hearted parental support by kneeling with them in prayer to Jesus Christ, whom you love and adore, and whom you wish always to obey.

SUGGESTED PRAYERS

I recommend to you these following prayers. You will find very little that is strange to you, and nothing, I fancy, that you cannot accept. There are many such prayers in Catholic prayer books. If you would prefer to use others, then by all means do so. After the prayers you will find a few notes of explanation or comment on each one. I have omitted many of our customary and specifically Catholic prayers, so as not to impose too great demands on your forbearance. If you find any minor difficulties, then argue them out with your wife, but do not let them prevent you from accepting the principle that a Christian family should pray together every evening to our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lover, our Lord and our God.

1. 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 ; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ; and lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

2. Hail, Mary, full of grace ; the Lord is with thee ; blessed

art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

3. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

4. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord ; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary ; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried ; He descended into hell ; the third day He rose again from the dead ; He ascended into heaven ; sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

5. My God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.

6. My God, I hope in Thee, for grace and for glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy and Thy power.

7. My God, because Thou art so good, I love Thee with all my heart, and for Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself.

8. O my God, I firmly believe that Thou art here and perfectly seest me, and that Thou art looking at all my actions, all my thoughts, and the most secret motions of my heart. Thou watchest over me with a wonderful love, every moment giving favours and keeping me from evil. Blessed be Thy Holy Name, and may all creation bless Thy sweet goodness, for the benefits which I have ever received from Thee, and particularly this day. Never allow me to be so wicked as to be ungrateful for all Thou hast done for me, or to offend Thee in return for Thy many blessings.

9. O my good God, I hate and detest all the sins which I have committed against Thee during my life, and especially the sins of this day, because Thou art so good, and sin displeases Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and make a firm resolution, by the help of Thy holy grace, never more to offend Thee. I promise not to do the things which may lead me into sin. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, and pardon me, because I am a wicked sinner. In the name of Thy beloved Son Jesus, I humbly beg of Thee to wash my soul with His Precious Blood, so that my sins may be entirely forgiven.

10. May Almighty God have mercy on us, and forgive us our sins, and bring us to life everlasting. Amen.

11. May the Almighty and Merciful Lord give us pardon, absolution, and remission of all our sins. Amen.

12. Receive, O Lord, my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my will. Take me, and all that I have and all that I am. Thou hast given me all, but now I give all things back to Thee, that Thy holy Will may be done. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace : these are sufficient for me, with them I shall be happy, and shall have no more to ask. Amen.

13. May the most just, the most high and the most holy Will of God be done in all things. May it be adored, praised and glorified by all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.

14. Dearest Jesus, teach us to be generous, teach us to serve Thee as Thou deservest, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save knowing that we do Thy holy Will. Amen.

15. O God, we are Thy children, and we beg Thee to hear our prayers.

O Almighty and Everlasting God, the eternal salvation of all who believe in Thee, the helper of all who trust in Thee, and the peace and comfort of all who love Thee and serve Thee, we pray that Thou wilt heal all those who are sick, and restore them to health, if it is Thy holy Will. We pray for our family, for all our relations and friends, for all who have been good to us, for all who are in need, for all those who are in sorrow and distress, for all poor sinners, for those who are dying, and for those who have died with some sins still on their souls. Dear God, bless each one of us, and help us to live always in Thy love and friendship.

16. Only in God find thy quiet, my soul :
From Him cometh my hope.
Only He is my rock and my salvation;
My stronghold : I shall not be moved.
In God is my salvation and my glory :
The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.
Trust ye in Him at all times, O people :
Pour out your hearts before Him :
God is a refuge to us.
Only in God find thy quiet, my soul :
From Him cometh my hope.

17. Visit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, this house and family, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy ; let Thy holy angels dwell here, who may keep us in peace, and let Thy blessing be always upon us, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

18. O Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world, save our family.

19. Mary, Mother of God, be a Mother to our family, and pray for us.

20. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

NOTES ON THE PRAYERS

1. It is usual for Catholics to begin and end all prayers with the sign of the Cross. It has been the universal Christian custom since the earliest centuries. I have not written it down here, in case you are unaccustomed to it. I have begun with the *Our Father*. This prayer needs no introduction to you. You know that it is the Lord's Prayer, the one given to the Apostles by Christ when they asked Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. Non-Catholics add : 'For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory'. These words are true, of course, but they were not said by our Lord in the *Our Father*. They had strayed into the text of some faulty manuscripts, which were used in their translation of the *Our Father*. We do not add them to the words of Christ.

2. I could not possibly leave out the *Hail Mary* from prayers for a Christian family. Christ's own family would be incomplete without His Mother. The *Hail Mary* is the English translation of that beautiful Latin prayer, the *Ave Maria*, which so many composers have set to music. The first half of the *Hail Mary* is made of words taken directly from Scripture (the first chapter of St Luke), and so are inspired by God Himself. They were said by the angel Gabriel and by St Elizabeth, our Blessed Lady's cousin. The second half of the prayer is a sort of commentary on these words, first given official introduction by the Church about four centuries ago. In it we ask the Mother of God, in her holiness, to pray for us and help us, now at this moment, and at the hour of our death, which is the one which will decide our eternal happiness or our eternal misery.

3. The *Glory be to the Father* is obviously in praise of God, the Blessed Trinity.

4. The *I believe* is called the Apostles' Creed because it comes to us from Apostolic times. You are quite familiar with it. It contains the fundamental truths of the Faith. All Christians are familiar with it. There is discussion, in some circles, as to what exactly it means, because one cannot be absolutely sure of the meaning of a written word. It cannot stand up and explain itself. But that is what the Church is for—to teach us, as Christ said. When in doubt, ask the teaching Church, and listen to what she says, because she speaks with the voice of Christ: 'He who heareth you, heareth Me'.

5. 'There remain Faith, Hope and Charity, these three', says St Paul. They are the three great virtues which link us with God. That is why we often make acts of Faith, Hope and Charity. These three prayers are those learned by all our school-children.

We believe in all that God teaches us, because He would not deceive us, and He cannot be making a mistake. We accept with our mind and intellect everything He says as true, on His authority alone, and for no other reason. We accept Christianity as being absolutely true, so that we should lay down our lives rather than cease to believe in, or even doubt, anything which the Church teaches us. That is Faith—a willing acceptance of the truth which comes from God. Unless we were absolutely certain, by Faith, of the truths taught by the Church, we should be fools to practise such a difficult religion.

6. Hope is another virtue. We believe that God is offering us heaven and the means to get there, and that He is Good, Merciful and All-powerful. Because we accept this as the truth, by Faith, we go on to trust in Him, or to hope in Him. We are ready to do our part by living a good life, because we have such a firm hope and confidence in Him that He will do as He has promised, and bring us to the glory of heaven, by giving us His grace and help in this life.

7. This is the Act of Charity, or Love. 'The greatest of these is Charity.' The important thing about it is to love God (Christ Himself tells us this), and the second great commandment of Christianity is dependent on it—to love our neighbour. We must love our neighbour 'for Thy sake', for the love of God, and for no other reason. If we love God perfectly, then we shall love our neighbour perfectly, and help him in every way. There can be

no true love of man without the love of God. We may 'do good' to our neighbour, without loving God, but we cannot love him in the true Christian sense of the word, which means that we see Jesus Christ in him, and try to treat him as we should treat Christ Himself.

All these Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity were written by St Leonard of Port Maurice.

8, 9, 10. Need no explanation.

11. 'Absolution' means being absolved or loosed from the chains and captivity of sin. 'Remission' is forgiveness.

12. The grace which we ask from God is the essence of the Christian life. Grace is that gift of God which pours into our soul the new life which Christ came to bring. Grace is a sharing in the life of God, as much as we are capable of it. St Peter says that we are made 'participators in the Divine Nature'. By grace our soul is elevated, illuminated and transformed, so that we become children of God, children of Light. If we die in the state of grace, we shall be eternally happy. Grace, given to us by Baptism and the other sacraments, helps us to live like Christ, and to triumph over our many sins and weaknesses. Only sin can deprive us of grace. It is our greatest ambition to live always in a state of grace, as children of God, in His love and friendship. Christ died to win grace for us, and all grace comes through His Life and Passion and Death, through the medium of prayer and the sacraments. We pray that we may always remain in the state of grace. If we lose grace by sin, we pray that our souls may be brought to life again through the merits of Christ's Precious Blood.

13. This prayer, and the ones before and after it, were all written by St Ignatius of Loyola. They are concerned with the words of Christ, 'Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Father, not My Will, but Thy Will be done.'

14. This asks for the true spirit of Christianity—the spirit of self-sacrifice, the desire to live our whole life for the honour and glory of God. 'All things whatsoever you do, in word or in work, do them all in the name of Jesus Christ', says the Apostle. A Christian should not be content to plod along in the negative way of the Ten Commandments alone, because the New Law of Christ is a law of love, which urges us not merely to avoid what is forbidden but to make positive efforts to offer ourselves to God with a real and burning affection. The Charity of Christ, the

love of Christ for us, impels us to spend ourselves tirelessly in His service, and to return love for love.

15. We pray for all our many needs.

16. This is an extract from the Psalms (Psalm 66, verses 6-9). The Old Testament is equally as precious to us as the New, because it is equally the word of God. The Psalms have always been dear to Christians, because they offer every sentiment of the human heart to the loving gaze of God our Father.

17. Angels are frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as the messengers of God, and the guides and guardians of His people.

18, 19, 20. Need no comment.

All these prayers may be said by the family together, with appropriate pauses, or they may be said by the head of the family, with the rest making the responses.

PUBLISHED BY THE INCORPORATED CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY, LONDON,
AND PRINTED BY THE WOMEN'S PRINTING SOCIETY, LTD., BRICK STREET,
PICCADILLY, W. 1

Printed in England

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