

**The Meditations for Rogation Days**  
**Rogation Tuesday**  
**MD 38**  
**(2/2)**

**Brother Joseph Le Bars**

**2nd point**

*"Our Lord gives us two reasons why prayer is so efficacious".*

We might think perhaps that "conditions" would be a better word than "reasons". "Reasons", however, is an interesting word and is needed here because it tells us why God hears our prayers and not what he requires of us in order to answer them. This shows that God has a great desire to give, and that "it is God's greatest pleasure to bestow gifts on men". The use of the word "conditions" would betray a human attitude. It would show a lack of belief in the unconditional love of God, who cannot resist the cries of his children. This is what De La Salle makes clear at this point.

*"The first is because of the faith and confidence with which we ask. «If you will only believe», says Jesus, «every gift you ask for in your prayer will be granted». He says «every gift», and thus excludes nothing".*

De La Salle's use of the word "indifféremment" (meaning "without distinction" and translated by "every") is surprising. Although it means "quoi que ce soit" (of any sort), the use of "tout" here is at first sight puzzling. One wonders why he did not use a translation of this quotation which includes this word. It is the word used in all the translations of Mt 21, 24 that I have consulted. The expression "quoi que ce soit" is found in all the translations that we have by Amelote for Mt 18, 19, where we find: "Quoi que ce soit qu'ils demandent ils l'obtiendront" (whatever they ask they will obtain). This quotation belongs to the passage on prayer in common ("if two of you on earth agree..."). Whether the writer linked these passages deliberately or not, it is interesting to see such a connection, especially if we recall the subjects which will be treated in MD 39: "On what we are to ask of God in prayer". One of these subjects, in the third point, is the close union that should exist among the Brothers.

*"Who would have thought that faith could be so powerful with God if Our Saviour, who is truth itself, had not given us the assurance?"*

In the French text, the use of the word "infailliblement" ("unfailingly") and not translated in the English text), is strong. De La Salle used it also in MD 36.1.2: "you should have recourse to prayer. therein you will infallibly find power to accomplish that which is above your natural strength". The use of this word is intentional, therefore.

The use of "you" instead of "we" is surprising here, especially as "on" ("one") used as the subject of "ask" is often synonymous with "we". As it happens this passage from the Gospel applies to all Christians. In DA 402.1.18 we read: "Is it not he...who assures us that he will grant us everything...".

The word "assurance" appears both in this point of the meditation and in the DA.

The inclusion of "who is truth itself" indicates the basis on which our faith is founded.

*"And not only has he made this known to us by word of mouth, but he has given us also an admirable example in the person of the woman of Canaan. She, having asked Our lord to deliver her daughter, possessed by the devil, deserved to be gratified solely by reason of her faith".*

In the French text, why does De La Salle use "ces paroles" (these words) instead of "ses" (her) which would seem more appropriate?

"He has given us also an admirable example" recalls a passage in MD 3.3.1, where the Founder says: "But this knowledge was not in itself sufficient. It was necessary that God himself, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, should show us the road we were to follow". Here too, words are supported by example. Is this a lesson in teaching methodology for the teachers?

In DA 402.1.19 we read: "It was this faith, which inspired the prayer of the woman from Canaan and the centurion of the Gospel, which was so great and so surprising that it aroused the admiration of Jesus Christ himself and was the reason why he granted them immediately what they had asked".

*"Jesus answered her, Woman, for this great faith of thine, let thy will be granted".*

It is interesting to note that St Augustine also refers to these two persons and, in particular, stresses their faith, in order to show that "Jesus Christ was sent for the conversion of the Gentiles" (Sermon 88, ch. 10).

*"You may be quite certain, therefore, that God will refuse you nothing that you ask with faith and confidence in his goodness".*

The final exhortation includes, as usual, the word "therefore", emphasises once again that God's goodness is assured and boundless, and highlights the efficacy of the prayer of those who believe.

**3rd point***"The second reason"*

De La Salle continues to follow his plan: "Our Lord gives us two reasons..."

*"why God grants everything to those who pray..."*

Once again we find the word "everything". As was established at the beginning of point 2, it "excludes nothing".

*"is because of the humility with which they ask for what they need"*

The Founder takes pains to show the truth of this by quoting from the Old and New Testament.

*"As the Wise Man says: «He laughs at the mocker, grants his favours to the humble» (Pr 3.34),*

*which means that whereas he gives nothing to the former, he refuses nothing to the latter.*

*This truth is illustrated in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, who were praying in the Temple. «I tell you», says Jesus, «this man went back home higher in God's favour than the other»".*

The highlighted text occurs also in Amelote 1685.

There are several references to the Pharisee and the Publican in St Augustine, in particular, in Sermon 137, ch. 4, and especially in Sermon 115, chapters 1 and 2, whose titles are respectively: "With how many entreaties and with how many parables Jesus Christ urges us to pray. Faith, source of prayer. Faith, support of faith" and "No true faith except in the humble. This is seen in the Pharisee and the Publican".

If the Founder read this text, he did not use much of the material in it, except the need for humility if prayer is to be acceptable to God.

Christ had already insisted on this in the Gospel:

*"and he gives the reason immediately after: «Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted»".*

De La Salle develops the idea in his commentary by saying that:

*"Thus Our Lord wishes to make us understand that the Pharisee's prayer was unheard because it was accompanied by sentiments of pride, whereas the Publican, despite his many sins, was completely forgiven owing to the spirit of contrition and humility with which he appeared before God, and thus he went home higher in God's favour".*

De La Salle makes the same point in DA 402.1.14 where, after referring to St John Chrysostom and St Jerome, he says: "This was the case also of the

Publican in the Gospel who, not daring to look up and, through humility, remaining outside the door to the Temple, deserved to be heard immediately, because of the humility of his prayer".

The second point of MD 63 also comments on this parable and points out that the Publican "owing to his humility and simplicity...went away justified".

The final exhortation could only be as follows:

*"When you pray, therefore, let it be with so much humility that God will not be able to refuse anything you ask".*

Who could this meditation have been written for?

One can suppose that they were persons with whom the Founder was sufficiently at ease and over whom he had, or could have, enough authority in order to reproach them in the way that he did:

*"You ought to be ashamed, therefore, at your sluggishness and negligence in prayer".*

Throughout this meditation, the pronoun "you" is in the singular. This is not noticeable when the meditation is read out loud.

On the other hand, the meditation has to do with personal prayer with a view to personal sanctification, even if the story of the Woman of Canaan might give the impression that prayer for others was the subject here.

Such expressions as "your miseries", "strive to be worthy of his promises" and "what they need" show that what is involved here is prayer for personal needs. It is interesting to compare this meditation with MD 37. Such a comparison raises the question why these texts which are so different, should be allocated to successive says..

Of course, the subject is different. This is a meditation on faith in God's promise and on the reasons why he grants everything to those who ask. It is not only a meditation on faith, but also a fine example of the Founder's own faith.

Is the title of the meditation suitable? I would prefer: "On the efficacy of prayer". This idea is clearly stated at the end of the second point: "You may be quite certain, therefore, that God will refuse you nothing that you ask with faith and confidence in his goodness". However, if we are moved first by the love of God and the confidence he inspires in us, then surely our prayer is a cry of affection to God.

But, when we pray, do we really want what we ask for? Perhaps we are not all that keen on obtaining it. •