

QUESTION 83

Prayer

Next we have to consider prayer (*oratio*). And on this topic there are seventeen questions: (1) Is prayer an act of an appetitive power or an act of a cognitive power? (2) Is it appropriate to pray? (3) Is prayer an act of religion? (4) Is it God alone who is to be prayed to? (5) In prayer, should something determinate be asked for? (6) In praying, should we ask for temporal things? (7) Should we pray for others? (8) Should we pray for enemies? (9) What about the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer? (10) Is praying proper to a rational creature? (11) Do the saints in heaven pray for us? (12) Should prayer be vocal? (13) Is attention required for prayer? (14) Should prayer be long-lasting? (15) Is prayer efficacious in obtaining what is asked for? (16) Is prayer meritorious? (17) What are the species of prayer?

Article 1

Is prayer an act of an appetitive power?

It seems that prayer (*oratio*) is an act of an appetitive power:

Objection 1: It belongs to prayer to be heard out. But it is desire (*desiderium*) that is heard out by God—this according to Psalm 9:38 (“The Lord has heard the desire of the poor”). Therefore, prayer is desire. But desire is an act of an appetitive power. Therefore, so is prayer.

Objection 2: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 3, Dionysius says, “Before all else it is advantageous to begin with prayer, in the sense of handing ourselves over to God and uniting ourselves with Him.” But one's union with God comes about through love, which belongs to an appetitive power. Therefore, prayer belongs to an appetitive power.

Objection 3: In *De Anima* 3 the Philosopher posits two operations of the intellectual part [of the soul], the first of which is the *intellectual grasp* of indivisibles (*indivisibilium intelligentia*), through which we apprehend with respect to each thing what it is, and the second of which is *composition and division* (*compositio et divisio*), through which one apprehends that something is or is not the case. A third is added to these, viz. to reason discursively (*rationari*) by proceeding from what is known to what is not known. But prayer is not traced back to any of these operations. Therefore, prayer is an act of an appetitive power and not of an intellectual power.

But contrary to this: In *Etymologia* Isidore says, “To pray is the same as to speak.” But speaking belongs to the intellect. Therefore, prayer is an act of the intellectual power and not of an appetitive power.

I respond: According to Cassiodorus, ‘*oratio*’ is, as it were, reasoning of the mouth (*oris ratio*). Now theoretical reason and practical reason differ from one another in that theoretical reason has to do only with apprehending things, whereas practical reason has to do not only with apprehending things but also with causing them (*ratio practical est non solum apprehensiva sed etiam causativa*).

Now there are two ways in which something can be a cause of something else: (a) *completely* (*perfecte*), by inducing necessity, and this occurs when the effect is totally subject to the power of the cause; and (b) *incompletely* (*imperfecte*), by disposing only, viz., when the effect is not totally subject to the power of the cause. So, then, there are two ways in which reason is a cause of given things: (a) perfectly, in the sense of imposing necessity, and in this way it belongs to reason to command not only the lower powers and members of the body, but also men who are subjects—and this is done by *commanding* (*imperando*)—and (b) in the sense of inducing and in some way disposing, and in this way reason *asks* (*petit*) for something to be done by those who are not subject to it, whether they be equals or superiors.

Now both of these acts, viz., commanding (*imperare*) and asking (*petere*) or begging (*deprecare*),

imply some sort of ordering, insofar as a man arranges for something to be done by another. Hence, they pertain to reason, whose role is to provide order; this is why the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 1, “Reason pleads on behalf of the best things.”

Right now we are talking about prayer insofar as it signifies a sort of begging or petitioning; it is in this sense that in *De Verbo Domini* Augustine says, “Prayer is a sort of petition,” and that in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “Praying is asking God for appropriate things.” So, then, it is clear that prayer in the sense in which we are now talking about it is an act of reason.

Reply to objection 1: The Lord is said to hear “the desire of the poor” either (a) because the desire is the cause of the begging, since the petition in some sense expounds upon the desire, or (b) in order to show how quickly God hears (*ad ostendendum exauditionis velocitatem*), since while something still exists in the desire of the poor, God hears it before they propose their prayer—this according to Isaiah 65:24 (“And it shall come to pass that before they cry out, I will hear them”).

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (q. 82, q. 4 and *ST* 1-2, q. 9, a. 1), the will moves reason toward its end. Hence, with the will moving reason, nothing prevents an act of reason from tending toward charity’s end, which is to be united with God.

Now there are two ways in which prayer tends toward God when it is moved, as it were, by the willing that belongs to charity:

(a) *on the part of what is being asked for*, since what is principally to be asked for in prayer is that we be united with God—this according to Psalm 26:4 (“One thing I ask of the Lord, this I require, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life”).

(b) *on the part of the petitioner himself*, who must approach the one whom he is petitioning, either spatially, as in the case of a human being, or mentally, as in the case of God. Hence, in the same place [Dionysius] says, “When we invoke God by our prayers, we are present to Him with our mind revealed.” And, accordingly, Damascene likewise says, “Prayer is the ascent of the intellect toward God.”

Reply to objection 3: The three acts in question belong to theoretical reason. But, in addition, as has been explained, it belongs to practical reason to cause something either by way of *commanding* or by way of *asking*.

Article 2

Is it appropriate to pray?

It seems that it is not appropriate (*non sit conveniens*) to pray:

Objection 1: Prayer seems to be necessary for letting the one from whom we are asking something know what we need. But as Matthew 6:32 says, “Your Father knows that you need these things.” Therefore, it is not appropriate to pray to God.

Objection 2: Through prayer the mind of the one who is prayed to is bent toward doing what is being asked of him. But God’s mind is immutable and unbendable—this according to 1 Kings 15:29 (“But the victor in Israel will not spare, and He will not be moved to repent”). Therefore, it is not appropriate for us to pray to God.

Objection 3: It is more generous to give something to someone who has not asked for it than to give something to someone who has asked for it; for, as Seneca says, “Nothing is bought more dearly than what is bought with prayers.” But God is the most generous of all. Therefore, it does not seem appropriate for us to pray to God.

But contrary to this: Luke 18:1 says, “You must pray and not grow weary.”

I respond: Among the ancients there were three errors concerning prayer:

(a) Some claimed that human affairs are not governed by divine providence. From this it follows that it is useless (*vanum*) to pray or to worship God at all. Of these individuals Malachi 3:14 says, “You

have said, 'It is useless to serve God'."

(b) The second error was the opinion of those who claimed that all things, even within human affairs, happen by necessity, either because of the immutability of divine providence or because of the necessity of the stars, or because of the connection among causes. And according to these individuals, the usefulness of prayer is likewise ruled out.

(c) The third error was the opinion of those who claimed that human affairs are governed by divine providence and that human affairs do not come about by necessity, but they asserted that the plan of divine providence is similarly variable and that the plan of divine providence is changed by prayers and other things that belong to divine worship.

All these errors were refuted in the First Book (*ST* 1, q. 22, aa. 2 and 4; q. 23, a. 8; q. 115, a. 6; and q. 116, a. 3).

And so we must account for the usefulness of prayer in such a way that (a) we do not impose necessity on human affairs subject to divine providence and that (b) we do not come to think of God's plan as changeable. Therefore, to make this clear, consider that divine providence plans not only *which effects* will come to be, but also *from which causes* they will come to be and *in what order* they will come to be. Among other causes, human acts are also the causes of certain things. Hence, it is necessary for human beings to do certain things, not in order to *change God's plan* by their actions, but in order that by their acts they might bring to completion certain effects *in accord with the order planned by God*. The same thing holds in the case of natural causes.

Likewise, it is similar in the case of prayer. We do not pray for the purpose of *changing* God's plan; rather, we pray *in order to procure what God has planned to be fulfilled through the prayers of the saints*, so that, as Gregory puts it in *Dialogia*, "by asking, men might merit to receive what almighty God has planned from eternity to give them."

Reply to objection 1: It is necessary for us to put our prayers before God not in order that we might make clear to Him what our needs or desires are, but rather in order that we ourselves might realize that we must have recourse to God's assistance in these matters.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, our prayer is ordered not toward changing God's plan, but toward obtaining by our prayers what God has planned (*ut obtineatur nostris precibus quod Deus disposuit*).

Reply to objection 3: Out of His generosity God furnishes us with many things, including things that we have not asked for. But the fact that He wishes to bestow certain things on us when we ask for them is for the sake of our advantage, viz., so that we acquire a certain confidence in having recourse to God, and so that we recognize that He is the source of our goods. Hence, Chrysostom says, "Consider how much happiness is granted to you, and how much glory is bestowed upon you, by talking with God in your prayers, by having a conversation with Christ, by longing for what you want, by asking for what you desire."

Article 3

Is prayer an act of [the virtue of] religion?

It seems that prayer is not an act of [the virtue of] religion:

Objection 1: Since religion is a part of justice, it exists in the will as its subject. But as is clear from what was said above (a. 1), prayer belongs to the intellective part [of the soul]. Therefore, praying seems to be not an act of religion, but an act of the gift of understanding, through which the mind ascends toward God.

Objection 2: Acts of adoration fall under the necessity of a precept. But prayer seems not to fall under the necessity of a precept, but instead apparently proceeds from a mere act of will, since it is

nothing other than asking for what one wants. Therefore, prayer does not seem to be an act of religion.

Objection 3: What seems to belong to religion is for someone to offer worship and ceremonies to the divine nature (*ut quis divinae naturae cultum caeremoniamque afferat*). But prayer does not seem to offer anything to God; instead, it apparently seeks to obtain something from Him. Therefore, prayer is not an act of religion.

But contrary to this: Psalm 140:2 says, “Let my prayer be directed like incense in Your sight,” where a Gloss says, “As regards the figure of incense, in the Old Law it was said to be offered as a sweet odor to the Lord.” But this pertains to religion. Therefore, prayer is an act of religion.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 81, aa. 2 & 4), it belongs properly to religion to show reverence and honor to God. And so everything by which reverence is shown to God belongs to religion. But through prayer a man shows reverence for God insofar as he subjects himself to Him and professes by praying that he needs God as the source of all good things. Hence, it is clear that prayer is properly an act of religion.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (q. 82, a. 1), the will moves the other powers of the soul toward their end. And so religion, which exists in the will, orders the other powers of the soul toward reverence for God. Now among the powers of the soul, the intellect is higher and closer to the will. And so after devotion, which belongs to the will itself, prayer, which belongs to the intellective part, is the main act of religion and the act by which religion moves a man’s intellect toward God.

Reply to objection 2: What falls under a precept is not only asking for what we desire, but also desiring something in the right way. But the desiring falls under a precept of charity, whereas the asking falls under a precept of religion. The latter precept is posited in Matthew 7:7 (“Ask and you will receive”).

Reply to objection 3: As is clear from the passage from Dionysius quoted above (a. 1, obj. 2), in praying a man hands over his mind to God, subjecting it to Him with reverence and in some sense presenting it to Him. And so just as the human mind is preeminent over the exterior or corporeal members, or over the exterior things that are used for service to God, so, too, prayer is preeminent over other acts of religion.

Article 4

Is it God alone who should be prayed to?

It seems that it is God alone who should be prayed to (*videtur quod solus Deus debeat orari*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 3), prayer is an act of religion. But only God is to be worshiped by religion. Therefore, only God is to be prayed to.

Objection 2: A prayer is offered in vain to someone who has no cognition of the prayer. But it belongs to God alone to have cognition of a prayer. This is both because (a) for the most part prayer is carried out by an interior act, which only God has cognition of, rather than vocally—this according to what the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 14:15 (“I will pray with my spirit, and I will pray with my mind”)—and also because (b), as Augustine says in *De Cura pro Mortuis Agenda*, “The dead, even the saints, do not know what the living, even their own children, are doing.” Therefore, prayer is to be offered only to God.

Objection 3: If we offer prayers to certain saints, this is only insofar as they are conjoined with God. But there are certain individuals living in this world—or even in Purgatory—who are very closely conjoined with God through grace. And yet prayer is not offered to them. Therefore, neither should we be offering prayer to the saints who are in Paradise.

But contrary to this: Job 5:1 says, “Call now if there be anyone that will answer you, and turn to some of the saints.”

I respond: There are two senses in which a prayer is directed to someone: (a) to be *fulfilled by* that individual (*per ipsum implenda*); (b) to be *obtained through the mediation of* that individual (*per ipsum impetranda*).

In the first sense, we direct our prayer only to God, since all our prayers should be ordered toward obtaining grace and glory, which only God grants—this according to Psalm 83:12 (“The Lord will give grace and glory”).

However, in the second sense, we direct our prayer to saintly angels and men, not in order that God might know of our petitions through them, but in order that our prayers might attain their effect through their prayers and merits. This is why Apocalypse 8:4 says, “The smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel.” And this point is likewise clear from the very mode that the Church uses in praying. For we ask the Blessed Trinity to “*have mercy on us,*” whereas we ask other holy individuals to “*pray for us.*”

Reply to objection 1: The only one to whom we offer the worship of religion by praying is the one from whom we seek to obtain what we pray for, since we thereby confess Him as the author of our goods, whereas we do not offer the worship of religion to those whom we need as our intercessors before God.

Reply to objection 2: The dead, thought of in their natural condition, do not have cognition of what is happening in this world and especially of the interior movements of the heart. But as Gregory explains in *Moralia* 12, what is appropriate for the blessed in heaven to know about what is happening among us is made clear to them in the Word, even with respect to interior movements of the heart. Most especially, it befits their excellence to know the petitions that are made to them either vocally or in the heart. And so, given that God makes clear the petitions that we address to them, they have cognition of them.

Reply to objection 3: Those who exist in this world or in Purgatory do not yet enjoy the vision of the Word, so that they might be able to know what we are thinking or saying. And so we do not implore their assistance (*eorum suffragia*) in our prayer; rather, we ask assistance from the living by speaking with them.

Article 5

Should we ask God for anything determinate in our prayer?

It seems that we should not ask for anything determinate from God (*nihil determinate a Deo petere debeamus*) in our prayer:

Objection 1: As Damascene says, “Praying is asking God for what is appropriate.” Hence, a prayer by which one asks for what is not expedient is inefficacious—this according to James 4:3 (“You ask and you do not receive, because you ask badly”). But as Romans 8:26 says, “We do not know what to pray for as we should.” Therefore, we should not ask for anything determinate when we pray.

Objection 2: If one asks for something determinate from another, then he is trying to incline the other’s will toward doing what he himself wants. But as is explained by a Gloss on Psalm 32:1 (“Exalt, you just, in the Lord”), we should try to bring it about that we will what God wills, rather than that God wills what we will. Therefore, we should not ask for anything determinate from God.

Objection 3: We should not ask God for bad things, whereas He Himself invites us to take good things. But it is pointless to ask someone for what you are already being invited to take. Therefore, one should not ask for anything determinate from God in prayer.

But contrary to this: In Matthew 6:9ff. and Luke 11:2ff. our Lord taught His disciples to ask determinately for what is contained in the petitions of the Lord’s prayer.

I respond: As Valerius Maximus reports, “Socrates thought that nothing should be asked for from the immortal gods beyond their giving us good things, since these gods know precisely what would be

useful for each individual, whereas we in our prayers frequently ask for what it would have been better for us not to obtain.”

This opinion is in some sense true with respect to those things that can have a bad outcome, as well as with respect to those things that a man can use both well and badly, “such as riches”—as he says in the same place—“which have been the death of many; honors, which have sunk many; power (*regna*), the miserable results of which are often seen; splendid marriages, which sometimes turn homes upside down.”

However, there are certain goods that a man cannot use badly, viz., goods that cannot have a bad outcome. Now these are the goods by which we are beatified and by which we merit beatitude. These goods the saint seeks in their prayer without qualification—this according to Psalm 79:4 (“Show us your face, and we shall be saved”) and, again, Psalm 118:35 (“Lead me along the path of your commands”).

Reply to objection 1: Even though a man cannot know on his own what he should pray for, “the Spirit”—as it says in the same place—“aids us in our weakness” in that, by inspiring holy desires in us, He makes us ask in the correct way. Hence, in John 4:23-24 our Lord says that true adorers “must adore in spirit and in truth.”

Reply to objection 2: When we ask in prayer for what pertains to our salvation, we conform our will to the will of God, of whom 1 Timothy 2:4 says, “He wills all men to be saved.”

Reply to objection 3: As regards good things, God invites us to approach them not by bodily steps, but by pious desires and devout prayers.

Article 6

Should a man ask God for temporal things in his prayer?

It seems that a man should not ask God for temporal things in his prayer:

Objection 1: We seek what we pray for. But we should not seek temporal things, since Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things [read: temporal things] will be added unto you.” He says that these things are not to be sought, but are to be added to what is sought. Therefore, temporal things should not be asked for from God in prayer.

Objection 2: One asks only for those things that he is concerned about. But we should not have concern for temporal things—this according to Matthew 6:25 (“Do not be concerned about your life, what you shall eat”). Therefore, we should not ask for temporal things in our prayer.

Objection 3: Our mind should be lifted up to God by our prayer. But in seeking temporal things one descends to those things which are below, contrary to what the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 4:18 (“... while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal”).

Objection 4: A man should not ask God for anything except what is good and useful. But sometimes temporal things are harmful not only spiritually, but even temporally. Therefore, they should not be asked for from God in prayer.

But contrary to this: Proverbs 30:8 says, “Give me only what is necessary for my life.”

I respond: As Augustine says in *Ad Probam, de orando Deum*, “It is permissible to pray for whatever it is permissible to desire.”

But it is permissible to desire temporal things—not, to be sure, as what is desired principally, so that we set up our end in them, but as certain subordinate goods by which we are aided in striving for beatitude, viz., insofar as our bodily life is sustained through them and insofar as they serve us instrumentally (*organice*) in acts of virtue. The Philosopher says the same thing in *Ethics* 1. Therefore, it is permissible to pray for temporal things.

This is what Augustine has to say in *Ad Probam*: “It is not inappropriate to want what is sufficient

for life if one wants that and no more. This is desired not for its own sake, but for the sake of the health of the body and of a fitting condition for the person of a man, in order that he not be discordant with those with whom he has to live. Therefore, one should pray for temporal goods—when they are had, that they might be held on to, and when they are not had, that they might be had.”

Reply to objection 1: Temporal goods are to be sought in a secondary way and not principally. Hence, in *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “When He said that *that*, viz., the kingdom of God, is to be sought first, He implied that *this*, viz., the temporal good, is to be sought afterwards (not in time, but in importance)—the former insofar as it is our *good*, the latter insofar as it is our *need* (*necessarium nostrum*).”

Reply to objection 2: As was established above (q. 55, a. 6), what is prohibited is not just any sort of concern for temporal things, but unnecessary and disordered concern.

Reply to objection 3: When our mind turns toward temporal things in order to find rest in them, it remains weighed down in them. But when it turns to them in relation to its pursuit of beatitude, it is not weighed down in them, but instead elevates them to a higher level.

Reply to objection 4: By the fact that we are asking for temporal things as something sought not principally but in relation to something else, in that sense we are asking God for them in order that they might be granted to us insofar as they are expedient for salvation.

Article 7

Should we pray for others?

It seems that we should not pray for others:

Objection 1: In praying we should follow the formula that our Lord has handed down to us. But in the Lord’s prayer we make petitions for ourselves and not for others when we say “Give us this day our daily bread” and other things of this sort. Therefore, we should not pray for others.

Objection 2: Prayer is made in order to be heard. But one of the conditions required for our prayer to be heard is that one pray for himself; hence, in commenting on John 16:23 (“If you ask the Father for anything in my name, He will give it to you”), Augustine says, “Everyone is heard for himself, but not for everyone. This is why He says, ‘He will give it to you’ and not just ‘He will give it’.” Therefore, it seems that we should pray only for ourselves and not for others.

Objection 3: We are forbidden to pray for others if they are bad—this according to Jeremiah 7:16 (“Do not pray for this people ... and do not oppose Me, for I will not listen to you”). On the other hand, it is unnecessary to pray for good people, since they are heard when they pray for themselves. Therefore, it seems that we should not pray for others.

But contrary to this: James 5:16 says, “Pray for one another, that you may be saved.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 6), in praying we should ask for what we should desire. But we should desire good things not only for ourselves but also for others. For this belongs to the nature of love (*dilectio*), which, as is clear from what was said above (q. 25, aa. 1 and 12; q. 27, a. 2; q. 31, a. 10), we should show to our neighbors. And so charity requires that we pray for others.

Hence, in *Super Matthaicum* Chrysostom says, “Necessity forces one to pray for himself, whereas the charity of fraternity urges one to pray for another. And the prayer that is more sweet before God is not the prayer that necessity sends, but the prayer that the charity of fraternity commends.”

Reply to objection 1: As Cyprian says in *De Oratione Dominica*, “We do not say ‘My Father’ but instead ‘Our Father’; nor do we say ‘Give me’ but instead ‘Give us’.” For the Master of unity does not want prayer to be made privately in the sense that one prays only for himself. He wants us to pray for everyone in the way that He Himself carried all of us together.”

Reply to objection 2: Praying for oneself is posited as a condition for prayer not in the sense that

it is necessary for effecting merit, but in the sense that it is necessary in order that it not to fail in obtaining what is prayed for (*sicut necessaria ad indeficientiam impetrandi*). For it sometimes happens that prayer for another does not obtain what is prayed for, even if it is offered with piety and perseverance and concerns things that pertain to salvation, because of an impediment on the part of the one for whom the prayer is offered—this according to Jeremiah 15:1 (“Even if Moses and Samuel should be standing before me, my soul is not turned toward that people”). Despite this, the prayer is still meritorious for the one who offers it, because he is praying out of charity—this according to Psalm 34:13 (“My prayer shall be turned to my own bosom”), where a Gloss explains, “Even if my prayer is of no profit to them, I am not deprived of my reward.”

Reply to objection 3: One should pray also for sinners, that they might be converted, as well as for the just, that they might persevere and make progress.

Yet those who pray are heard not on behalf of *all* sinners, but on behalf of *some*. For they are heard on behalf of those who are predestined, but not on behalf of those who are foreknown unto death (*non pro praescitis ad mortem*). Likewise, the corrections by which we correct our brothers have an effect in those who are predestined, but not in those who are reprobate—this according to Ecclesiastes 7:14 (“No one can correct someone whom God has despised”). And this is why 1 John 5:16 says, “He who knows that his brother is sinning by a sin that is not unto death, let him ask and life will be given to the one who sins by a sin that is not unto death.” However, just as no one, as long as he is alive here [below], should be deprived of the benefit of being corrected, since, as Augustine points out in *De Correptione et Gratia*, we are unable to distinguish those who are predestined from those who are reprobate, so, too, no one should be denied the assistance of prayer.

The just should likewise be prayed for, and this for three reasons. First, because the prayers of many are more easily heard. Hence, a Gloss on Romans 15:30 (“Help me in your prayers”) says, “The Apostle does well to ask the lesser brethren to pray for him. For many little ones, when they come together in one spirit, become large, and it is impossible for the prayers of the many not to be effective,” i.e., to obtain what can be obtained. Second, in order that many might give thanks to God for the benefits that He confers on the just, which also redound to the advantage of the many; this is clear from the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 1:11. Third, in order that the greater brethren not become proud as long as they keep in mind that they need the prayers of the lesser brethren.

Article 8

Should we pray for our enemies?

It seems that we should not pray for our enemies:

Objection 1: As Romans 15:4 says, “Whatever has been written has been written for our instruction.” But in Sacred Scripture one finds many curses (*imprecationes*) against enemies; for instance, Psalm 6:11 says, “Let all my enemies be ashamed and troubled; let them be ashamed and troubled very speedily.” Therefore, we likewise should pray against our enemies rather than on their behalf.

Objection 2: To be vindicated against one’s enemies is bad for the enemies. But the saints ask for vengeance against their enemies—this according to Apocalypse 6:10 (“How long do you not take vengeance for our blood against those who dwell on the earth?”) That is why they likewise rejoice over their vindication against the wicked—this according to Psalm 57:11 (“The just man will rejoice when he sees his vindication”). Therefore, one should pray not on behalf of his enemies, but against them.

Objection 3: A man’s works should not be contrary to his prayers. But men sometimes attack their enemies justly; otherwise, all war would be illicit—which is contrary to what was said above (q. 40, a. 1). Therefore, we should not pray for our enemies.

But contrary to this: Matthew 5:44 says, “Pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 7), to pray for another belongs to charity. Hence, in the same way that we are obliged to love our enemies, we are obliged to pray for our enemies.

Now the way in which we are obliged to love our enemies was established above in the treatise on charity (q. 25, aa. 8-9), viz., (a) that we are obliged to love the nature in them and not their sin, and (b) that loving our enemies in a general way falls under a precept, whereas loving them in a specific way does not fall under a precept except with respect to the preparation of the mind, so that a man would be prepared to love his enemy even in a specific way and to help him in a case of extreme need, or if he sought forgiveness. On the other hand, to love one’s enemies and to help them in a specific way without exception (*absolute*) belongs to perfection.

Similarly, it is necessary that in the general prayers that we make for others we not exclude our enemies. On the other hand, that we pray for them in a specific way belongs to *perfection* and not to *necessity*, except in certain special cases.

Reply to objection 1: There are four ways to understand the curses that occur in Sacred Scripture:

In one way, as Augustine explains in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, insofar as “the prophets used to foretell the future in the form of someone cursing.”

In the second way, in the sense that certain temporal evils are sometimes sent by God to sinners for their correction.

In the third way, the curses are interpreted as being asked for not against the men themselves, but against the reign of sin, so that sin might be destroyed by correcting the men.

In the fourth way, in order to conform one’s own will to divine justice as regards the damnation of those who have persevered in sin.

Reply to objection 2: In the same book Augustine says, “The vindication of the martyrs is that the reign of sin, under whose rule they had suffered so much, should be overthrown.”

An alternative reply is that, as is said in *De Quaestionibus Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, “They are asking not aloud but in their minds, in the way that the blood of Abel called out from the earth.” Moreover, they rejoice over the vindication not for its own sake, but for the sake of divine justice.

Reply to objection 3: It is licit to attack one’s enemies in order that they might be restrained from their sin, and this yields good both for them and for others. And so it is likewise licit to ask in prayer for certain temporal evils for one’s enemies, in order that they might be corrected. And in this way the prayer will not be contrary to the action.

Article 9

Is it appropriate to enumerate seven petitions in the Lord’s prayer?

It seems that it is not appropriate to enumerate seven petitions of the Lord’s prayer:

Objection 1: It is useless to ask for what is always the case. But the name of God is always holy—this according to Luke 1:49 (“Holy is His name”). Likewise, His kingdom lasts forever—this according to Psalm 144:13 (“Your kingdom, O Lord, is a kingdom for all ages”). Again, God’s will is always fulfilled—this according to Isaiah 46:10 (“All My will shall be done”). Therefore, it is useless to ask that the God’s name be hallowed, that His kingdom come, and that His will be done.

Objection 2: Receding from evil is prior to attaining the good. Therefore, it seems inappropriate for the petitions that pertain to attaining the good to be placed before the petitions that pertain to receding from evil.

Objection 3: Something is asked for in order that it might be given. But the preeminent gift of God is the Holy Spirit and the things given to us by Him. Therefore, it seems inappropriate for the petitions in question to be proposed, since they do not correspond to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Objection 4: According to Luke, only five petitions are posited in the Lord's prayer, as is clear from Luke 11:2ff. Therefore, it was superfluous for seven petitions to be posited according to Matthew 6:9ff.

Objection 5: It seems useless to seek the benevolence of someone who preempts us with his benevolence. But God preempts us with His benevolence, since, as 1 John 4:10 says, "He loved us first." Therefore, it is superfluous to preface the petitions with "Our Father who art in heaven," which seems to have to do with seeking benevolence.

But contrary to this the authority of Christ, who formulated the prayer, is sufficient.

I respond: The Lord's prayer is the most perfect prayer, since, as Augustine puts it, "If we pray correctly and fittingly, we will be unable to say anything other than what is posited in this prayer of our Lord's." For since prayer is in a certain sense the carrier of our desire in the eyes of God, it is right for us to ask in prayer only for those things that we can rightly desire.

Moreover, in the Lord's prayer not only do we ask for all the things that we can rightly desire, but these things are also asked for in the order in which they are to be desired, so that this prayer not only instructs us to ask but also informs all of our affections.

Now it is clear that what falls under our desire is first the end and then the means to the end. But our end is God, toward whom our affections tend in two ways: (a) insofar as we will God's glory, and (b) insofar as we will to enjoy His glory. The first of these pertains to the love by which we love God in Himself, whereas the second pertains to the love by which we love ourselves in God. And so the *first* petition is posited, *that His name be hallowed*, through which we seek the glory of God. Then the *second* petition is posited, *that His kingdom come*, through which we ask to arrive at the glory of His kingdom.

Now there are two ways in which something orders us toward the aforementioned end: (A) in its own right (*per se*) and (B) incidentally (*per accidens*).

(A) *In its own right*, a good that is useful for the end. But there are two ways in which something is useful for the good of beatitude:

(a) *directly and principally*, in accord with the merit through which we merit beatitude by obeying God. And what is posited on this score is: *Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven*.

(b) *instrumentally*, i.e., as assisting us in meriting, and what pertains to this is: *Give us this day our daily bread*, regardless of whether this is understood as the sacramental Bread, the daily use of which profits a man and in which all the other sacraments are understood, or as corporeal bread, where by 'bread' is understood "wholly sufficient food," as Augustine says in *Ad Probam*, and this is why in the Gospel of Matthew it is called 'supersubstantial' (*supersubstantialem*)—i.e., 'preeminent' (*praecipium*), as Jerome explains.

(B) *Incidentally* we are ordered toward beatitude by the removal of what prevents us from attaining it. Now there are three things that prevent us from obtaining it:

(a) The first is *sin*, which is directly excluded from the kingdom—this according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 ("Neither fornicators nor idolaters ... will possess the kingdom of God"). And what pertains to this is: *Forgive us our trespasses*.

(b) The second is *temptation* which impedes us from observing God's will. And what pertains to this is: *Lead us not into temptation*. Through this petition we do not ask not to be tempted, but rather ask that we not be conquered by temptation.

(c) The third is *present hardship* (*poenalitas praesens*), which impedes what is necessary for life. And on this score it says: *Deliver us from evil*.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine points out in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, when we say, *Hallowed be Thy name*, "this is not being asked for as if God's name were not holy, but in order that His name might be held as holy by men"—which pertains to propagating God's glory among men.

Now when *Thy kingdom come* is said, it is not said as if God did not now reign. Rather, as Augustine explains in *Ad Probam*, "We are stirring up our desire for that kingdom, in order that it might come to us and we might reign within it."

Again, *Thy will be done* is rightly understood as “May Thy commands be obeyed.” *On earth as it is in heaven*, i.e., as by the angels, so by men.

Hence, these three petitions will be perfectly fulfilled in the future life, whereas the other four petitions pertain to what is needed in the present life, as Augustine explains in *Enchiridion*.

Reply to objection 2: Since prayer is the carrier of desire, the order of the petitions corresponds not to the order of *execution* but instead to the order of *desire* or *intention*, in which (a) the end is prior to the means to the end and (b) the pursuit of the good is prior to the removal of evil.

Reply to objection 3: In *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine adapts the seven petitions to the gifts and the beatitudes. This is what he says: “If the *fear of God* is that by which the blessed are *poor in spirit*, then let us ask that God’s name be hallowed among men with a chaste fear. If *piety* is that by which the blessed are *mEEK*, then let us ask that His kingdom come in order that we might be meek and not resist Him. If *knowledge* is that by which the blessed are *they who mourn*, then let us pray that His will be done, because then we will not be mourning. If *fortitude* is that by which the blessed are *they who hunger*, then let us pray that our daily bread be given to us. If *counsel* is that by which the blessed are merciful, then let us remit our debts in order that our debts might be remitted for us. If *understanding* is that by which the blessed are *pure of heart*, then let us pray that we not have a divided heart by running after temporal things, from which temptations arise in us. If *wisdom* is that by which the blessed are peaceable because they will be called children of God, then let us pray that we be liberated from evil, since the liberation itself will make us free children of God.”

Reply to objection 4: As Augustine says in *Enchiridion*, “In the Lord’s prayer Luke included five petitions and not seven. For in showing that the third petition is in some sense a repetition of the two preceding petitions, he makes it understood by omitting it, viz., because God’s will is mainly aimed toward our recognizing His holiness and reigning with Him.

Likewise, what Matthew posited at the end, *Deliver us from evil*, Luke did not posit, in order that each individual might know that he is liberated from evil in the very fact that he is not led into temptation.

Reply to objection 5: Prayer is directed toward God not in order that we might sway Him, but in order that we might stir up within ourselves the confidence to ask him. This is stirred up within us mainly by considering (a) His charity toward us, by which He wills our good—and this is why we say *Our Father*—and (b) His excellence, by which this is possible—and this is why we say *Who art in heaven*.

Article 10

Is praying proper to rational creatures?

It seems that praying is not proper or peculiar to rational creatures (*orare non sit proprium rationalis creaturae*):

Objection 1: Asking (*petere*) and receiving (*accipere*) seem to belong to the same thing. But to receive belongs also to uncreated persons, viz., the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is likewise appropriate for them to pray. For instance, in John 14:15 the Son says, “I will ask the Father,” and the Apostle says of the Holy Spirit, “The Spirit asks urgently (*postulat*) on our behalf” (Romans 8:26).

Objection 2: Angels lie beyond rational creatures, since they are intellectual substances. But it belongs to the angels to pray; hence, in Psalm 146:9 it says, “Adore Him, all you His angels.” Therefore, it is not proper to rational creatures.

Objection 3: Praying belongs to one who is invoking God, which is mainly done by praying. But it is appropriate for non-rational animals to invoke God—this according to Psalm 146:9 (“Who gives the beasts their food, and the young ravens who invoke Him”). Therefore, praying is not proper to rational animals.

But contrary to this: As was established above, praying is an act of reason. But a creature is called rational because of reason. Therefore, praying is proper or peculiar to rational creatures.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (a. 1), *praying* is an act of reason by which one implores a superior, in the way that *commanding* is an act of reason by which a subordinate is ordered toward something. Therefore, praying belongs peculiarly to someone to whom it is appropriate to have reason and who has a superior whom he is able to implore.

Now nothing is superior to the divine persons, whereas non-rational animals do not have reason. Hence, it is incongruous for both divine persons and non-rational animals to pray. Rather, praying is proper or peculiar to rational creatures.

Reply to objection 1: It is proper to the divine persons to receive *by nature*, whereas praying belongs to someone who receives *by grace*.

Moreover, the Son is said to ask, or to pray, with respect to His assumed nature, viz., His human nature, and not with respect to His divine nature. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is said to ask urgently (*postulare*) because He makes us urgent askers.

Reply to objection 2: As was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 79, a. 8), reason (*ratio*) and understanding (*intellectus*) are not diverse powers in us, but instead differ as the imperfect and the perfect. And so sometimes intellectual creatures, who are angels, are distinguished from rational creations, whereas sometimes they are included under *rational creatures*. And it is in this latter sense that prayer is said to be proper to rational creatures.

Reply to objection 3: The young ravens are said to ‘invoke’ God because of the natural desire by which all things in their own way desire to attain God’s goodness. In the same way, non-rational animals are likewise said to ‘obey’ God because of the natural instinct by which they are moved by God.

Article 11

Do the saints in heaven pray for us?

It seems that the saints in heaven (*sancti qui sunt in patria*) do not pray for us:

Objection 1: One’s act is more meritorious for himself than for others. But the saints in heaven do not merit for themselves, since they have already been established at their terminus. Therefore, they do not pray for us, either.

Objection 2: The saints perfectly conform their will to God, so that they will only what God wills. But what God wills is always fulfilled. Therefore, it is useless for the saints to pray for us.

Objection 3: Just as the saints in heaven are superior to us, so are those in purgatory, since they can no longer sin. But those in purgatory do not pray for us; it is instead we who pray for them. Therefore, the saints in heaven do not pray for us, either.

Objection 4: If the saints in heaven prayed for us, the prayer of the higher saints would be more efficacious. Therefore, it is the assistance of the prayer only of the higher saints, and not of the lower saints, that should be implored.

Objection 5: Peter’s soul is not Peter. Therefore, if the souls of the saints were praying for us for as long as they were separated from their bodies, then we should not be imploring St. Peter to pray for us; instead, we should be imploring his soul to pray for us.

But contrary to this: 2 Maccabees 15:14 says, “It is he who prays abundantly for the people and for the entire holy city—Jeremiah, the prophet of God.”

I respond: As Jerome explains, the error of Vigilantius was to claim that “while we are alive, we are mutually able to pray for one another, but after we have died, no one’s prayer will be heard for another—especially given that the martyrs, praying for their blood to be avenged, were not able to obtain this.”

But this is altogether false. For since, as has been said (aa. 7-8), prayer that is made on behalf of others proceeds from charity, to the extent that the saints in heaven are more perfect in charity, they pray all the more for pilgrims here on earth (*pro viatoribus*), who can be helped by these prayers; and to the extent that the saints are more closely joined to God, their prayers are all the more efficacious. For the divine order is such that the excellence of what is higher pours forth on what is lower, just like the brightness of the sun in the atmosphere. Hence, in Hebrews 7:25 it is said of Christ, "... going to God in His own right, in order to intercede on our behalf." For this reason, in *Contra Vigilantium* Jerome says, "If the apostles and martyrs, while still in their bodies, can pray for others, even while they must still be solicitous for themselves, then how much more will they be able to pray for others after their crowns, their victories, and their triumphs."

Reply to objection 1: Since the saints in heaven are blessed, they lack nothing except the glory of the body, for which they pray. But they pray for us, who lack the ultimate perfection of beatitude. And their prayers have the efficacy of procurement because of their previous merits and because of God's acceptance of them.

Reply to objection 2: The saints ask for what God wills to be done because of their prayers. And they ask for what they think will be fulfilled because of their prayers according to God's will.

Reply to objection 3: Even if those in purgatory are superior to us because of their inability to sin (*propter impeccabilitatem*), they are nonetheless inferior to us because of the punishments that they suffer. And, accordingly, they are not in the state of praying, but rather in the state of being prayed for.

Reply to objection 4: God wills that what is lower should be assisted by *everything* that is higher. And so one should implore not only the higher saints but also the lower saints. Otherwise, it would be the case that only God's mercy should be implored.

However, it sometimes happens that it is more efficacious to implore lower saints, either because the lower saints are implored in a more devout way or because God wants to make their holiness known.

Reply to objection 5: Since the saints merited while living in order that they might pray for us, we invoke them by the names by which they were called here and by which they are likewise more known to us—and also for the sake of making known our faith in the resurrection, just as one reads in Exodus 3:6 ("I am the God of Abraham, etc.").

Article 12

Should prayer be vocal?

It seems that prayer should not be vocal (*vocalis*):

Objection 1: As is clear from what has been said (a. 4), prayer is offered principally to God. But God has cognition of the language of the heart. Therefore, it is useless to employ vocal prayer.

Objection 2: As has been explained ((a. 1), through prayer a man's mind should ascend to God. But spoken words, like other sensible things, draw men back from ascending in contemplation to God. Therefore, spoken words should not be used in prayer.

Objection 3: Prayer should be offered to God in secret—this according to Matthew 6:6 ("But you, when you pray, go into your room and, with the door closed, pray to your Father in secret"). But prayer is made public by the voice. Therefore, prayer should not be vocal.

But contrary to this: Psalm 141:2 says, "I have cried with my voice to the Lord, and with my voice I have begged the Lord."

I respond: There are two kinds of prayer: *communal* prayer (*oratio communis*) and *individual* prayer (*oratio singularis*).

Communal prayer is prayer that is offered to God by the ministers of the Church in the person of all the faithful (*in persona totius fidelis populi*). And so this sort of prayer depends on the entire people, on

behalf of whom it is offered. This could not happen if it were not vocal. And so it is reasonable for things to be instituted in such a way that the ministers of the Church should enunciate prayers of this sort with full voice, so that the prayers can come to the notice of everyone.

By contrast, individual prayer is prayer that is offered by any given individual either for himself or for others. And it is not necessary for prayer of this sort to be vocal. Still, there are three reasons why such prayers are said out loud (*adiungitur vox tali orationi*):

First, in order to stir up interior devotion, by which the mind of the one who prays is elevated toward God. For through exterior signs, whether vocal signs or even certain artifacts, a man's mind is moved both by apprehension and, as a result, by affection. Hence, in *Ad Probam* Augustine says, "By words and other signs we stir ourselves more acutely to increase our holy desire." On the other hand, if the mind is distracted by this or in any way impeded by it, then one should cease doing it. This mainly happens with people whose mind is sufficiently prepared for devotion without any signs of this sort. Hence, the Psalmist said, "My heart has spoken to you, my face has sought you out" (Psalm 26:8). And 1 Kings 1:13 says of Hanna: "She spoke in her heart."

Second, vocal prayer is added, as it were, to rendering a debt, so that a man serves God with the totality of what he has from God, i.e., not only with his mind, but also with his body. This is appropriate mainly for prayer by which one makes satisfaction. Hence, Hosea 14:3 says, "Take away all iniquity and receive the good, and we will render the bulls of our lips."

Third, vocal prayer is added as an overflow from the soul into the body because of strong affection—this according to Psalm 15:9 ("My heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced").

Reply to objection 1: Vocal prayer is offered not in order to make something God does not know manifest to Him, but rather in order that the mind of the one praying or of others might be stirred up toward God.

Reply to objection 2: Words that have to do with something else distract one's mind and impede the devotion of the one praying. But words that signify something that has to do with devotion stir up minds, especially less devout minds.

Reply to objection 3: As Chrysostom says in *Super Matthaenum*, "What our Lord forbids is praying in an assembly in order to be seen by the assembly. Hence, one who is praying should do nothing strange (*novum*) like shouting or pounding his breast or stretching out his hands." And yet, as Augustine says in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, "It is not wrong to be seen by men; what is wrong is doing these things in order that you might be seen by men."

Article 13

Is it necessary for prayer to be done attentively?

It seems that it is necessary for prayer to be done attentively (*de necessitate orationis sit quod sit attenta*):

Objection 1: John 4:24 says, "God is a spirit; and those who adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth." But prayer is not "in spirit" if it is not done attentively. Therefore, it is necessary for prayer to be done attentively.

Objection 2: Prayer is the ascent of the intellect toward God. But when prayer is not done attentively, the intellect does not ascend to God. Therefore, it is necessary for prayer to be done attentively.

Objection 3: It is necessary for prayer to be wholly free from sin (*quod careat omni peccato*). But there is no lack of sin if someone suffers from a wandering mind during prayer (*quod aliquis orando evagationem mentis patitur*); for he seems not to be taking God seriously (*videtur eum deridere Deum*)—just as if someone were speaking to a man and not paying attention to what he was saying.

Hence, Basil says, “God’s assistance is not to be implored carelessly or with one’s mind wandering here and there, because such prayer will not only not obtain what it asks for, but will even irritate God.” Therefore, it seems to be necessary for prayer to be done attentively.

But contrary to this: Even holy men sometimes suffer from a wandering mind when they are praying—this according to Psalm 39:13 (“My heart has deserted me”).

I respond: This question arises mainly in regard to vocal prayer. On this topic, notice that there are two ways in which something can be called ‘necessary’ (*necessarium*):

In the first way, the thing in question is such that *through it the end is arrived at in a better way*. And in this sense attentiveness is absolutely necessary for prayer.

In the second way, the thing in question is such that *without it the thing cannot attain its effect*.

Now there are three effects of prayer:

(a) The first effect is common to all acts that are informed by charity, viz., *to merit* (*mereri*). And for this effect it is not necessarily required that attentiveness be present for the whole time. Instead, the force of the primary intention with which someone begins to pray renders the whole act of praying meritorious—as likewise happens in the case of other meritorious acts.

(b) The second effect of prayer is proper to it, viz., *to supplicate* (*impetrare*). And the primary intention, which God mainly takes into consideration, is sufficient for this effect as well. However, if the primary intention is lacking, then the prayer is neither meritorious nor supplicatory. For as Gregory puts it, “God does not listen to a prayer that the one who prays is not paying attention to.”

(c) The third effect of prayer is the one that it produces immediately (*praesentialiter*), viz., a sort of spiritual refreshment of the mind. And for this effect, attentiveness is necessarily required. Hence, 1 Corinthians 14:14 says, “When I pray in tongues ... my understanding is without fruit.”

However, notice that there are three sorts of attentiveness that can be applied to vocal prayer: (a) paying attention to the *verbal formula* (*verba*), lest one make a mistake in pronouncing it; (b) paying attention to the *meaning* of the words; and (c) paying attention to the *aim* of the prayer, viz., to God and to the thing for which one is praying—something that even very simple individuals (*idiotae*) can do. And as Hugh of St. Victor points out, sometimes this intention, by which the mind is carried toward God, is so intense that the mind is oblivious to everything else.

Reply to objection 1: The one who prays “in spirit and in truth” is he who undertakes prayer because of the inspiration of the Spirit (*ex instinctu spiritus*)—even if his mind afterwards wanders because of weakness.

Reply to objection 2: Because of the weakness of its nature, the human mind cannot remain elevated (*in alto*) for a long time. For the soul is pushed down toward lower things by the weight of the weakness of its nature. And so it happens that when the mind of the one who is praying ascends to God through contemplation, it suddenly wanders because of some sort of weakness.

Reply to objection 3: If one mentally wanders on purpose (*ex proposito*) in his prayer, then this is a sin, and it impedes the fruit of prayer. And it is against this sin that Augustine says in *Regula*, “When you pray to God with psalms and hymns, what you pronounce with your mouth should be turned over in your heart.”

However, the wandering of the mind that occurs unintentionally (*praeter intentionem*) does not destroy the fruit of prayer. Hence, Basil says, “If, weakened by sin, you are unable to pray with fixed attention (*fixe*), control yourself as much as you can and God will overlook it, since it is not out of negligence but out of weakness that you are unable to abide in His presence in the way that you ought to.”

Article 14

Should prayer last for a long time?

It seems that prayer should not last for a long time (*oratio non debeat esse diuturna*):

Objection 1: Matthew 6:7 says, “Do not do much talking when you are praying.” But someone who prays for a long time has to do a lot of talking, especially if the prayer is vocal. Therefore, prayer should not last for a long time.

Objection 2: Prayer expresses desire. But the more restricted to a single thing a desire is, the holier it is—this according to Psalm 26:4 (“One thing have I asked of the Lord, this alone I require”). Therefore, in like manner, the shorter a prayer is, the more acceptable it is to God.

Objection 3: It seems to be impermissible for a man to transgress the limits fixed by God, especially in those matters that pertain to the worship of God—this according to Exodus 19:21 (“...lest they should decide to transgress the intended limits in order to see the Lord, and a very great multitude of them should perish”). But as is clear from Matthew 6, the limits of praying have been fixed by God through the institution of the Lord’s prayer. Therefore, one is not permitted to extend his prayer beyond this.

But contrary to this: It seems that one should pray continuously. For in Luke 18:1 our Lord says, “Pray always, and do not cease.” And 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without intermission.”

I respond: There are two ways in which we can speak of prayer: (a) *in its own right* (*secundum seipsam*) and (b) *with respect to its cause* (*secundum causam suam*).

Now the *cause* of prayer is the desire belonging to charity, and this is what prayer should proceed from. This cause should be continuous in us either in actuality or virtually (*virtute*), since the power (*virtus*) of this desire remains in all the things that we do out of charity, and we ought “to do all things for the glory of God,” as 1 Corinthians 10:31 says. And on this score prayer should be continuous. Hence, in *Ad Probam* Augustine says, “We pray with a continuous desire in faith, hope, and charity themselves.”

However, prayer itself, considered *in its own right*, cannot be continuous (*assidua*), because there are other acts that one has to be occupied with. However, as Augustine says in the same place, “At fixed hours and times we also beseech God with words, in order to admonish ourselves with these signs of things and to find out for ourselves how much progress we are making in this desire, and to stir ourselves up more eagerly to do this.”

Now the quantity of each thing should be proportioned to the end; for instance, the quantity of the medicine should be proportioned to health. Hence, it is appropriate for prayer to last as long as is useful for stirring up the fervor of interior desire. However, when it exceeds this measure, so that it cannot continue without tedium, prayer should not be extended any further. Hence, in *Ad Probam* Augustine says, “The brethren in Egypt are said to make frequent prayers, but they are very short and uttered rapidly, so that the vigilantly erected attention that is necessary for someone who prays a lot should not slacken and languish because of more prolonged pauses. By doing this they show clearly enough that just as this attention should not be forced if one is unable to endure, so, too, it should not be broken off too quickly if one does endure.”

And just as this matter should be treated in the case of singular prayer by reference to the attention of the individual praying, so, too, it should be treated in the case of communal prayer by reference to the devotion of the people.

Reply to objection 1: In *Ad Probam* Augustine says, “If one is praying for a longer time, this is not to pray with more words. Many words are one thing; a longer-lasting affection is another thing. For it is written of our Lord Himself that He spent the whole night in prayer and that He prayed more profusely in order to give us an example.” Later on Augustine adds, “Let a lot of talking be absent from prayer, but do not stop praying a lot if your attention in praying persists. For talking a lot in praying is to do something necessary with too many words. And oftentimes this business is done more with groans than

with words.”

Reply to objection 2: The prolixity of a prayer consists not in asking for many things, but in the affection’s continuing to desire a single thing.

Reply to objection 3: Our Lord instituted this prayer not in order that we should use only *these words* in praying, but because the intention of our prayer should be aimed only at obtaining *these things*, no matter how we express them or think about them.

Reply to the argument for the contrary: Someone prays continuously either (a) because of a continuity of desire, as has been explained, or (b) because he does not stop praying at fixed times, or (c) because of the effect, whether it be the effect in the one praying, given that he remains more devout even after praying, or in someone else—as, for instance, when someone by his good deeds prompts another individual to pray for him, even when he himself has stopped praying.

Article 15

Is praying meritorious?

It seems that praying is not meritorious:

Objection 1: Every merit proceeds from grace. But praying precedes grace, since even grace itself is asked for through prayer—this according to Luke 11:3 (“Your Father in heaven will give the good Spirit to those who ask Him”). Therefore, praying is not a meritorious act.

Objection 2: If praying merits anything at all, it seems especially to merit what is asked for in the prayer. But praying does not always merit this, since even the prayers of the saints are oftentimes not heard; for instance, Paul was not heard when he asked for the sting of the flesh to be removed from him. Therefore, praying is not a meritorious act.

Objection 3: Prayer relies mainly on faith—this according to James 1:6 (“Let him ask in faith, without wavering”). But as is clear in the case of those who have unformed faith, faith is not sufficient for meriting. Therefore, praying is not a meritorious act.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Psalm 34:13 (“My prayer shall be turned into my bosom”) says, “Even if it did not profit them, I at least did not lose out on my reward.” But a reward (*merces*) is not owed except for merit. Therefore, praying has the nature of merit.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 13), prayer, in addition to the effect of spiritual consolation that it brings to bear immediately, has two sorts of power with respect to future effects, viz., the power of meriting (*virtutem merendi*) and the power of supplication (*virtutem impetrandi*).

Now praying, like any other act of a virtue, has the effect of meriting insofar as it proceeds from the root of *charity*, the proper object of which is the eternal good that we merit enjoyment of. But praying proceeds from *charity* through the mediation of *religion*, which, as has been explained, praying is an act of, along with, in addition, certain other virtues that are required for prayer’s being good, viz., *humility* and *faith*.

For it belongs to *religion* to offer the prayer itself to God. On the other hand, what belongs to *charity* is the desire for the thing whose fulfillment prayer seeks. Moreover, *faith* is necessary in reference to God, whom we pray to, in the sense that we believe that we can obtain from Him what we are praying for. And humility is necessary in reference to the seeker, who recognizes his own neediness. *Devotion* is likewise necessary, but this belongs to *religion*, since devotion is the first act of religion and, as was explained above (q. 82, aa. 1-2), is necessary for all the subsequent acts.

Prayer has the efficacy of its supplication from the grace of God, whom we pray to, and who also induces us to pray. Hence, in *De Verbo Domini* Augustine says, “We would not be encouraged to ask for things if He were not willing to grant them.” And Chrysostom says, “He who encourages those who pray not to fail in their piety never withholds His kindnesses from someone who prays.”

Reply to objection 1: Just like any other virtuous act, prayer that is done in the absence of habitual grace (*sine gratia gratum faciente*) is not meritorious. And yet even a prayer that asks for habitual grace proceeds from some grace—from, as it were, a gratuitous gift—since praying is itself a certain “gift from God (*donum Dei*),” as Augustine puts it in *De Perseverantia*.

Reply to objection 2: Sometimes the merit of a prayer has mainly to do with something other than what is being asked for, since merit is mainly ordered toward beatitude, whereas the petition involved in a prayer sometimes extends to certain other things. This is clear from what has been said (a. 6).

Therefore, if some other thing that one seeks for himself is not useful to him for beatitude, then he does not merit that thing. In fact, sometimes in seeking and desiring that thing he loses merit—for instance, if he were to seek from God the completion of some sin, which is impossible to pray for piously.

On the other hand, sometimes the thing sought is neither necessary for salvation nor clearly contrary to salvation. In such a case, even if the one praying can merit eternal life by praying, he nonetheless does not merit to obtain what he is asking for. Hence, in *Librum Sententiarum Prosperi* Augustine says, “Someone who faithfully asks God for the necessities of this life is both mercifully heard and mercifully not heard. For the physician knows better than the sick individual what is useful for him.” Similarly, the reason why Paul was not heard when he sought to have the sting of the flesh removed from him was that it was not expedient.

On the other hand, if what is asked for is useful for the man’s salvation in the sense of pertaining to his salvation, then he merits that thing not only by praying for it but also by doing other good works. And so he undoubtedly receives what he asks for—though at a time when he should receive it. For as Augustine says in *Super Ioannem*, “Certain things are not denied but are deferred to an appropriate time.” However, this can be impeded if the individual does not persevere in asking for the thing in question. And this is why Basil says, “The reason why you sometimes ask and do not receive is that you have asked incorrectly, i.e., you have asked without faith (*infideliter*) or carelessly (*leviter*), or you have asked for what is unprofitable to you, or you have stopped asking.”

However, since, as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 114, a. 6), a man cannot by his own worthiness merit eternal life for someone else (*non potest alii mereri vitam aeternam ex condigno*), it follows that sometimes he likewise cannot by his own worthiness merit for someone else those things that pertain to eternal life. For this reason, as was established above (a. 7), he is not always heard when he prays for someone else.

And so one posits four conditions which, when they all come together, are such that one always obtains what he asks for, viz., that he ask (a) *on his own behalf* for (b) *something that is necessary for salvation*, and that he ask for it (c) *with piety* and (d) *with perseverance*.

Reply to objection 3: Prayer relies mainly on faith not for the effect of meriting, since this depends mainly on charity, but for the effect of obtaining what is prayed for. For through faith a man has knowledge of God’s omnipotence and mercy, and it is through these that prayer obtains what it asks for.

Article 16

Do sinners obtain anything from God by praying?

It seems that sinners do not obtain anything from God by praying:

Objection 1: John 9:3 says, “We know that God does not hear sinners.” This is consonant with what Proverbs 28:9 says: “If someone turns his ears away from hearing the Law, his prayer will be accursed (*execrabilis*).” But an accursed prayer does not obtain anything from God. Therefore, sinners do not obtain anything from God.

Objection 2: As was established above (a. 15), the just obtain from God what they merit. But

sinner cannot merit anything, since they lack grace along with charity, which is “the virtue of piety,” as it is put by a Gloss on 2 Timothy 3:55 (“... having an appearance indeed of godliness, but negating its power”). And so they cannot pray with piety—which, as was explained above (a. 15), is what is required for a prayer to obtain what it asks for. Therefore, sinners do not obtain anything by praying.

Objection 3: In *Super Matthaem* Chrysostom says, “The Father does not willingly hear a prayer that Son has not prescribed.” But in the prayer which Christ prescribed it says, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”—something that sinners do not do. Therefore, either they are lying when they say this and for this reason are not worthy to be heard, or, if they do not say the prayer, then they are not heard because they are not preserving the form of praying that was instituted by Christ.

But contrary to this: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “If God did not hear sinners, then it would have been useless for the publican to say, ‘Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.’” And in *Super Matthaem* Chrysostom says, “Everyone who asks receives, i.e., whether he be just or a sinner.”

I respond: There are two things that have to be taken account of in the case of a sinner, viz., his *nature*, which God loves, and his *sin*, which God hates.

Therefore, if a sinner in praying asks for something insofar as he is a sinner, i.e., in accord with his desire to commit a sin, then this is not heard by God in His mercy, but instead it is sometimes heard unto vindication, when God permits the sinner to fall further into sin. For as Augustine says, “In His mercy He negates certain things that He allows in His anger (*quaedam negat propitius quae concedit iratus*).”

By contrast, God does hear the prayer of a sinner that proceeds from the good desire that belongs to the nature—not out of justice, since the sinner does not merit this, but out of pure mercy, given that the four conditions mentioned above (a. 15, ad 2) are satisfied, viz., that he asks on his own behalf, that what he asks for is necessary for salvation, and that he asks with piety and with perseverance.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine points out in *Super Ioannem*, those words were spoken by the blind man while he was “still unanointed,” i.e., when he was not yet perfectly illuminated. And so they have no authority (*verbum non est reatum*).

Reply to objection 2: A sinner cannot pray with piety in the sense that his prayer is informed by the habit of the virtue. But his prayer can nonetheless be pious in the sense that he seeks something that belongs to piety, just as someone who does not have the habit of justice can, as is clear from what was said above (q. 59, a. 2), will something just. And even though his prayer is not meritorious, it can nonetheless obtain what is asked for; for merit is based on justice, but obtaining what one prays for is based on grace.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained, the Lord’s prayer is offered by the communal person of the whole Church (*profectus ex persona communi totius Ecclesiae*). And so if someone who does not want to forgive his neighbors their trespasses recites the Lord’s prayer, he is not lying, even though what he says is not true with respect to his own person. For it is true with respect to the person of the Church, outside of which merit, and thus the fruit of prayer, is lacking.

However, sometimes certain sinners are prepared to forgive their debtors. And so they themselves are heard when they pray—this according to Ecclesiasticus 28:2 (“Forgive your neighbor when he hurts you, and your sins will be forgiven you when you pray”),

Article 17

Is it appropriate to enumerate the parts of prayer as acts of supplication, acts of praying, acts of intercession, and acts of thanksgiving?

It seems that it is inappropriate to enumerate the parts of prayer as acts of supplication

(*obsecrationes*), acts of praying (*orationes*), acts of intercession (*postulationes*), and acts of thanksgiving (*gratiarum actiones*):

Objection 1: Supplicating (*obsecratio*) seems to be a certain sort of adjuring (*adiuratio*). But as Origen says in *Super Matthaem*, “A man who wishes to live in accord with the Gospel must not adjure another; for if he is not permitted to swear, then neither is he permitted to adjure.” Therefore, it is wrong to posit acts of supplication as a part of prayer.

Objection 2: According to Damascene, praying is asking for appropriate things from God (*petitio decentium a Deo*). Therefore, it is wrong for acts of praying (*orationes*) to be divided off from acts of intercession (*postulationes*)

Objection 3: Acts of thanksgiving (*gratiarum actiones*) have to do with the past, whereas the others have to do with the future. But past things are prior to future things. Therefore, it is wrong to place acts of thanksgiving after the others.

But contrary to this is the authority of the Apostle in 1 Timothy 2:1 [“I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men”].

I respond: Three things are required for prayer:

(a) *The one who is praying approaches God*, whom he is praying to. This is what is signified by the name ‘prayer’ or ‘praying’ (*oratio*), since praying is an ascent of the intellect toward God.

(b) What is next required is a *petition (petitio)*, which is signified by the name ‘act of intercession’ (*postulatio*), regardless of whether (i) the petition is proposed in a determinate way, which some call an *act of intercession (postulatio)* properly speaking, or (ii) in an indeterminate way, as when someone asks God for help, and this they call an *act of supplication (supplicatio)*, or (iii) a simple fact is stated—this according to John 11:3 (“Behold, the one whom you love is ill”)—and this they call an *act of intimation (insinuatio)*.

(c) What is required next is the reason for receiving what is asked for (*ratio impetrandi quod petitur*). And this is either on the part of God or on the part of the petitioner. On the part of God, the reason for receiving is His holiness, in light of which we ask to be heard—this according to Daniel 9:17-18 (“Incline your ear, my God, because of Your very self”). And this is what an *act of supplication (obsecratio)*, which is an entreaty (*contestatio*) by reference to sacred things, has to do with—as when we say, “Through your nativity, O Lord, free us.” On the other hand, the reason for receiving on the part of the petitioner is an *act of thanksgiving (gratiarum actio)*, since “in giving thanks for gifts received, we merit to receive even greater gifts,” as the Collect [for Ember Friday in September] puts it.

And so a Gloss on 1 Timothy 2:1 says: “In the Mass there are *acts of supplication* which precede the Consecration” and in which certain holy things are remembered; “there are *prayers* in the Consecration itself,” during which the mind should be especially elevated toward God, “whereas there are *acts of intercession* in the petitions that follow the Consecration, and *acts of thanksgiving* at the end.”

These four parts can be seen in many of the Church’s Collects. For instance, in the Collect for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, when it says, “Omnipotent and eternal God,” this has to do with ascent of *prayer* toward God; when it says, “Who gave your servants, etc.,” this has to do with an *act of thanksgiving*; when it says, “Grant, we beseech You, etc.,” this has to do with an *act of intercession*; and when it posits at the end, “Through our Lord, etc.,” this has to do with an *act of supplication*.

By contrast, in the *Collationes Patrum* it says that (a) an *act of supplication (obsecratio)* is a call for help because of our sins; that (b) a *prayer (oratio)* is when we vow something to God; that (c) an *act of intercession (postulatio)* is when we ask for something on behalf of others. But the first explanation above is better.

Reply to objection 1: An act of supplication is not an act of adjuring in order to compel someone, which is prohibited. Instead, it is an act of adjuring in order to beg for mercy.

Reply to objection 2: Prayer (*oratio*) as commonly understood includes all the things that are being discussed here. But insofar as it is divided off from the others, it properly implies the ascent toward God.

Reply to objection 3: There are diverse ways in which past things precede future things, but one and the same thing is future before it is past. And the act of giving thanks for one set of gifts precedes the act of asking for other gifts, but one and the same gift is first asked for and then, when it has been received, is such that one gives thanks for it. Now prayer, through which we approach Him whom we are asking, precedes an act of intercession. But an act of supplication precedes prayer, since it is on the basis of a consideration of God's goodness that we dare to approach Him.