

malignity, at our eternal ruin, what hope of heaven remains if God, from His throne of glory, does not look down on us with compassion; if he arm us not, and, in the midst of the deadly conflict, strengthen us to obtain the victory? The very moment He would withdraw His all protecting hand, fatal experience would prove to everyone of us the truth of that divine assertion: "Without me you can do nothing." — *John XV.*, 5.

A moment's reflection will convince us that, in the ordinary dispensation of Divine Providence, God's grace, so indispensably necessary, will not be given unless through prayer. St. James in his epistle says: "You have not because you ask not." — *IV.* 2. And our Lord Himself declares: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." — *Luke XI.*, 10 — which not only shows that prayer is necessary, but leaves the inference that if we do not ask and seek and knock, we shall not receive. The same will also appear from all those other texts where our Lord commands us to pray. "And He spoke to them a parable that we ought always to pray and not to faint." — *Luke XVIII.*, 1. And He enforces this as the one great means of overcoming the temptations to which we are daily subject: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." — *Luke XXII.*, 40. His apostles always inculcated the practice of this holy exercise on all who embraced the faith. "Pray without ceasing in all things," writes St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "for this is the will of God concerning you." — *I.* 17.

We may, therefore, safely conclude that the whole question of man's sanctification and salvation depends upon the constant and proper use of the means of prayer. "As God in the natural order," says St. Alphonsus, "ordained that man should be born helpless and in want of the many necessaries of life, and as, at the same time, He has given him hands and understanding to provide for all his wants, so also in the supernatural order, man is born incapable of remaining good and obtaining salvation by his own strength; but God, in His infinite goodness, grants