

woman, the publican and the good thief, deeming ourselves unworthy of being heard. « The prayer of him who humbleth himself shall penetrate to heaven, saith the Holy Ghost, and shall not return until it be granted. »

*Devout* — That is to say respectful and above all fervent, as if we wished to do violence unto God, like Jacob who said to the angel : « I will not leave thee till thou hast blessed me. »

*Confident* — Otherwise prayer is not worship ; it does not honor God : « He who hesitates in the faith, says St. James, that is he who has but little confidence, cannot expect that his prayers will be granted. »

*Persevering* — As a rule God grants a favor only after it has been solicited many times and even for a long time. Hence these words of Jesus : « Men ought always to pray and not to faint. » Prayer asks, but perseverance in prayer wins.

Finally its *object must be good and useful to the soul*. If your little child were to ask you for a sharp-pointed knife or a poisonous fruit, you would refuse it even if he cried bitterly for it. God, your heavenly Father, does the same when, without knowing it, you ask him for things that would be injurious to your salvation, such, for instance, as health of which you would make a bad use. How many persons are now saved owing to an infirmity or illness which God has sent them and who, without such infirmity or illness, would be lost ! How many poor people are saved who would be damned were they rich ! How many millions of little children form the cortege of the divine Lamb who would infallibly have been damned with their mothers, had not God snatched them from the blind tenderness of the latter without heeding their tears ! How many pious women have been saved because they lost their children in early childhood ! We also pray God with excessive earnestness for something which will lead, if not to our eternal damnation, at least to temporal misfortune, and then God sometimes grants our prayer to punish us for not conforming to His holy will. This happened to the marchioness of Spadar who lived in Naples at the same time as St. Joseph of the Cross. Her only son, named Gennaro, was dangerously ill and she begged the saint, the great miracle-worker, on several occasions to come and see him. Contrary to